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THE EFFICACY OF LANGUAGE IN SEAN O'CASEY'S DRAMA: A STUDY OF THE SILVER TASSIE AND COCK-A-DOODLE DANDY

by

© STEPHEN M. PEZIM

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Efficacy of Language in Sean O'Casey's Drama: A Study of The Silver Tassie and Cock-a-doodle Dandy

submitted by Stephen M. Pezim

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

R.F. Hill
Supervisor

D.F. Hill

Diane Bessai

Date December 14, 1978

Abstract

The language of Sean O'Casey's drama is perhaps the most remarkable aspect of his work and yet it has received surprisingly little critical attention. Since 1960, the language has been increasingly recognized for its complexity and innovation but, until very recently, no single play has undergone detailed linguistic analysis. This thesis examines primarily the language of two plays: The Silver Tassie (1928) and Cock-a-doodle Dandy (1949). In both plays, there is a thematic cohesiveness which will clearly be seen to be the product of O'Casey's control and imaginative use of language.

Chapter one briefly summarizes the existing criticism on O'Casey's dramatic language. This introductory section, while noting the universal recognition of certain stylistic shortcomings in O'Casey, demonstrates the inappropriateness of various critical comments and approaches. Chapter one also gives several reasons why The Silver Tassie and Cock-a-doodle Dandy have been selected for study.

The second chapter examines the structure and style of The Silver Tassie, arguing in support of the play's much disputed unity. The language of the play is rich, allusive, drawn from a wide range of literary and experiential sources; the acts are closely linked by a number of recurring linguistic techniques which foster the development of character and theme.

Chapter three, centering on Cock-a-doodle Dandy, examines the deceptive power and complexity of the language and, throughout, implicitly argues against the common criticism that the play is a mere

narrow diatribe. A section of the chapter is specifically devoted to Gaelic folk and literary elements in the language: O'Casey's exuberant adaptations of the flyting and the colloquy, for instance, convincingly attest to his ability as a dramatist and a literary artist.

The final chapter demonstrates the inadequacy of one major critic's approach to O'Casey's dramatic adaptation of the flyting. As well, chapter four briefly examines the prospects for future linguistic assessments of O'Casey's drama.

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Without the patience and gentle urging of my supervisor, Dr. Ronald Ayling, this thesis simply would not exist. When I most needed advice or an opinion, he was ready to help, and often sacrificed his own limited free time. My friend, Gordon Harvey, also gave freely of himself, closely marking and commenting on several early drafts. Agnes Hubert, Dale Taylor and Rhoda Zuk typed and proofread with tireless efficiency. Barry Nolan and John Johansen provided vital suggestions and encouragement, as did others, from beginning to end. I am grateful to each one for such devotion and for making thesis-writing a less lonely task than it must ordinarily be.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The considerable body of Sean O'Casey criticism, accumulating now for over fifty years, is marked by a major deficiency. In the spring of 1978, Bernice Schrank, in the Irish University Review, unhappily reported that there were "no extended studies of any O'Casey plays from the point of view of language."[1] Schrank does allude to the "seminal remarks" on "O'Casey's dramatic language" made by Raymond Williams in Drama from Ibsen to Brecht, and Ronald Ayling in Sean O'Casey: Modern Judgements;[2] and, of course, she is likely unaware of essays, written concurrently to hers, by Simon Williams[3] and Carol Kleiman,[4] who attach primary importance to O'Casey's skill with language. There are still others, notably Robert Hogan and David Krause, whom Schrank might well have credited with breaking ground for future linguistic approaches to O'Casey. But, essentially, Schrank is right: O'Casey's language, at times so intricate and efficacious as to render it an obvious topic for discussion, has somehow received inadequate critical attention. It is accordingly the intention of this thesis to amend the long standing disproportion in O'Casey studies.

While he does not follow up his claim with "extended" dramatic analyses, Robert Hogan best describes the complexity of language in O'Casey's plays:

> O'Casey's language gets its power from more than the idiom of the Dublin slums. It depends upon its witty distortions of syntax, its rhythm, repetition, dialect, malapropisms, alliteration, and a completely unrestricted vocabulary, one free to create havoc in any corner of the language, rather than restricted by the argot of a small group.[5]

Hogan's assertion is the first significant recognition of O'Casey's skill and diversity in the use of dramatic language. If Hogan (and perhaps Krause) bring the issue of language out of relative obscurity, Ronald Ayling sharpens the focus on the subject while he expands its perimeters. Aspects of language are explored in Ayling's "Introduction" to Modern Judgements,[6] in "Patterns of Language and Ritual in Sean O'Casey's Drama,"[7] and most recently in his critical monograph where he discusses O'Casey thoroughness in broader but no less meaningful terms than Hogan's:

> [O'Casey was a] Playwright in the true sense of the word, that is, a deliberate and painstaking craftsman in the making of plays for stage performance, continually exploring the resources of the modern theatre and seeking to expand the range and depth of the drama; literary artist in that, throughout a long career, he took his work seriously, searching for the right words in the right order and for the most effective means of organising his material. He was a poet by method as well as by nature, taking infinite trouble over even minor details, writing and re-writing many drafts of each play.[8]

While these comments may be, to some extent, informed by Ayling's friendship and personal correspondence with the playwright, their perceptiveness will be confirmed in the extended analysis of dramatic language in the chapters that follow.

Whether Raymond Williams, in his Drama from Ibsen to Brecht, changed or merely opened his mind with regard to O'Casey's dramatic language, is less important than the method and substance of both his original commentary (in Drama from Ibsen to Eliot, 1952; rev. 1964) and the 1968 revaluation. Ronald Ayling, within his point by point refutation of Williams' earlier assessment, rightly censures Williams for

limiting his discussion to The Plough and Red Roses.[9] Ayling's rejection of Williams' disproportionate analysis might well have mentioned that Red Roses for Me, by no means a bad play, does not represent O'Casey's best drama. Generally speaking, Williams' approach is untenable, for surely one can find fault with the lesser plays of the greatest dramatists. It is more objectionable, however, to find Williams taking exception later in his book to F.R. Leavis who argues from a similarly limited perspective. Defending W.B. Yeats against Leavis' sweeping estimation, Williams complains:

> One wishes that Mr. Leavis had gone farther, demonstrating his judgement on the plays (it is from a few chosen sentences of Yeats, which could be at least balanced by other chosen sentences, that he argues; not from any text).[10]
>
> (my italics)

Indeed, one wishes that Mr. Williams had gone farther in Drama from Ibsen to Eliot to demonstrate the validity of his judgement on more than a fraction of the O'Casey canon (nearly all of which would have been at Williams' disposal by the time the 1964 revision was being written). Nevertheless, as if to anticipate Ayling's criticism (just then going to press), Williams released Drama from Ibsen to Brecht (1968) wherein no less than five O'Casey plays are favorably discussed. The "adjectival drunkenness"[11] which Williams originally ascribed to the plays has, in his more recent estimation, taken on new relevance and meaning, has on occasion appeared to have intoxicated the critic himself.[12] The language that had been sodden (perhaps "sotted" is closer) is now credited with a subtlety something akin to the drunken poignancy of Macbeth's Porter. In Juno, for example, Williams rightly sees a vital contrapuntal

function in "the endless, bibulous, blathering talk"[13] of Boyle, Joxer and others. And in The Plough, the "colour" once thought to have been "artificially infused" in order that O'Casey might escape "the inadequacies of naturalism,"[14] now joins with other devices to create not only innovative but thematically controlled drama:

> The use of random colour, of flags, of slogans, of rhetoric and comic inflation, of the sentimental song, of reminiscences of theatre (as in Nora repeating the mad Ophelia) is a rush of disintegration, of catching at temporary effects, which is quite unique . . ..[15]

Although Williams, in his discussion of O'Casey, appears to have applied his professed critical method somewhat belatedly, his newer observations are welcome if brief. However, Williams' more balanced assessment of what he had regarded as excesses in style does not alter the fact that even the most positive commentators frankly admit to some overwritten passages in O'Casey. While Thomas Kilroy links that excessiveness chiefly to O'Casey's Abbeyesque "consciousness of literary reputation,"[16] John Arden is much less delicate:

> The high-flown burblings of Yeats, for instance, on the "symbolic values of the Japanese Noh" must have been very daunting [to O'Casey]. We can now recognize that Yeats' objections to naturalism were not very far removed from O'Casey's own more intuitive reaction; but he couched his theories in such unnecessarily exotic jargon that O'Casey can be excused for retreating from such pretension into an insistence upon an almost pedantic Zolaism in the stage-directions of the early plays.[17]

Exposing the roots of stylistic deficiencies, of course, does not exonerate the literary artist; still, there are a number of critics -- notably, Ayling, Arden, and lately, as we have seen, Raymond Williams -- who convincingly argue that much of the alleged or apparent overwriting

in O'Casey is deliberate, purposive, whether it is intended to sharpen theme, develop character, or even inform the stage designer of a desired subtlety of effect that would otherwise be lost.[18]

Aside from the question of verbiage in O'Casey, (which will not go unnoticed in the chapters to follow), there is another aspect of intrusive or heavy-handed language which must be considered; Thomas Kilroy notes that not only O'Casey's overelaborateness but also "the high-pitched tone of his opinions has often led to a total dismissal of his work."[19] In the ultra-nationalist correspondence of Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, one finds the most misinformed, prejudicial kind of accusation levelled at O'Casey's writing.[20] One such charge from her letters, that The Covey's disparaging response to the Platform Speaker (representing Padraic Pearse) in act II of The Plough is virtual blasphemy, completely disregards (as O'Casey is quick to point out) the necessity for consistent characterization. While O'Casey admits that he agrees, in this instance, with the substance of the The Covey's remark, the rest of the play shows how facile it is to regard the young Jenerskyite as a straight persona representing O'Casey's ideological tendencies. Though the playwright himself adequately illuminates Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington's critical dilettanteism, Jack Lindsay is most instructive in what amounts to an implicit dismissal of reactionary and/or over-simple estimations of quasi-spokesmen like The Covey:

> . . . because [O'Casey] is an artist seeking to tell the whole human truth and is no narrow propagandist, the [first three] plays also set that proletariat in a critical perspective. The people, for various historically explainable reasons, have failed to follow effectively the lead given by Larkin. Their confusions and passivities have made possible the middle-class domination

> of the republican and national movement. Hence the subtle mixture of sympathy and satire with which O'Casey treats them. In them lies the only hope, yet they are steadily demoralised and driven from the centre of the situation. The shop-looting in The Plough [in which the Covey, it should be remembered, is an unabashed participant] is an exposure both of the way in which the Republican Movement, for all its rhetoric, has failed to rouse the masses, and of the way in which those masses are unable to rise to the historic occasion and mould it in their likeness.[21]

If one is to apprehend the complexity of many of O'Casey's characters, one must realize (as John Arden has, in echoing Lindsay) that for O'Casey,". . . the proletariat (or, for that matter, the bourgeoisie) is made up of three-dimensional flesh-and-blood human beings who do not necessarily run according to predictable rules . . . ."[22]

Notwithstanding the vehemence of Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, O'Casey is perhaps more legitimately open to charges of heavy-handed or intrusive writing in the plays written after The Plough. A fair judgement of O'Casey's tone in any play, however, must include an examination, or at least an acknowledgement, of how diversity in language and theatricality are often crucial in tempering sequences which tend otherwise to be overwrought. The major criticism in the last ten years has consistently emphasized, but not extensively detailed, the importance of linguistic and theatrical devices to a full appreciation of O'Casey's drama. It is auspicious, nevertheless, that as eminent a critic as Raymond Williams is now inclined to see both a judicious use and a harmonious union of literary and theatrical elements in a number of O'Casey plays. The present thesis, while concentrating on linguistic analysis, will also be mindful of stagecraft when, as Williams suggests, it "facilitate[s] and enforce[s] the communication of language."[23]

Of the twenty-two published plays, The Silver Tassie (1928) and Cock-a-doodle Dandy (1949) would merit individual study on the sole basis that they show great diversity and innovation in style, and perhaps the highest degree of complexity and efficacy in language. But O'Casey himself suggests a reason why they might be studied successively. In 1958, he outlines his theory of playwriting, his recipe for "living" drama:

> To me what is called naturalism, or even realism, isn't enough. They usually show life at its meanest and commonest, as if life never had time for a dance, a laugh, or a song. I always thought that life had a lot of time for these things, for each was a part of life itself; and so I broke away from realism into the chant of the second act of The Silver Tassie. But one scene in a play as a chant or a work of musical action and dialogue was not enough, so I set about trying to do this in an entire play, and brought forth Cock-a-doodle Dandy.[24]

O'Casey's prospective view of his directions in drama supplements this retrospective synopsis. In June of 1928, just after the publication of The Tassie, O'Casey specifies the problems with, and his personal solutions for, the writing of good "modern" drama:

> But it seems to me that this Expressionism is an important element in the present and in the coming Drama, but that at present, it isn't human enough. Now (I think) mere conventional characterization, be it never so powerful, isn't enough either. It cannot represent the complexity of the present age. [. . .] [One achieves that complexity] By (I think) uniting the power of phantasy that is in Expressionism -- or what is called Expressionism -- with the power of humanity that is in Elizabethanism -- whatever that may be.[25]

Despite a certain tentativeness and a humorously self-conscious use of literary jargon, two points become clear: in The Silver Tassie, O'Casey offers the first substantial synthesising of "apparently contrary disciplines;"[26] Cock-a-doodle Dandy constitutes the culmination

of that process, the successful blending of disparate modes of expression.

Ten years ago, Ronald Ayling objected that the disputes over The Silver Tassie have received far more written attention than the intrinsic merits of the play itself.[27] Ayling's disconcertment is understandable, and must in part account for the recent predominance of criticism on, rather than about, The Tassie. It is, nevertheless, profitable to use Yeats' well-known remarks on the play as a springboard for a discussion of language. Yeats' letter of rejection strikes hard at an issue which must be linked to any meaningful linguistic approach to the play -- the issue of unity. An attempt will be made in this thesis to show that The Silver Tassie is tightened by a wide range of interlacing verbal motifs. In a sense, these patterns of language are mnemonic, effecting juxtapositions or reminiscences which repeatedly isolate and intensify the play's harsh realities. It is, in short, a rich, allusive language, influenced by literary figures ranging from Aristophanes to Shaw, pointed by contemporaneous military and athletic diction, and ironically marked by Christian prayer and practice from the Roman Breviary, Missal, The Book of Common Prayer, and The King James Bible.

Cock-a-doodle Dandy offers a similar literary and religious allusiveness but, in addition, draws heavily on the Gaelic tradition O'Casey studied, taught and loved. O'Casey's knowledge truly complements his still topical satire; according to Ronald Ayling,

> It is certainly true that O'Casey's use of imagery and illustrations drawn from Gaelic mythology in his later work is not extraneous but functional, a referential

scale of values by which modern Ireland is judged and found wanting.[28]

Unlike the chapter on The Tassie, which undertakes essentially an act-by-act analysis due to that play's crucial developmental structure, the chapter on Cock will begin by focussing on the language of key individuals; it will note, in the continuous struggle between the forces of life and choking puritanism, both the varied manifestations of clerical repression and the nature of pro-Cock resistance. Character studies will be followed by a discussion of the flyting, the colloquy and other relevant aspects of Gaelic folk and literary tradition. The chapter will conclude with an examination of the deliberate language of confusion in Cock, particularly as it is exemplified in Sailor Mahan: as the early Abbey successes repeatedly demonstrate, it is in the dramatic "state o' chassis" that O'Casey's tragicomedy flourishes.

Chapter II: "Savagery and Fine Words": Language in The Silver Tassie

In his letter rejecting Sean O'Casey's fourth major play, W.B. Yeats writes,

> But you are not interested in the great war; you never stood on its battlefields or walked its hospitals, and so write out of your opinions. You illustrate those opinions by a series of almost unrelated scenes, as you might in a leading article; there is no dominating character, no dominating action; neither psychological unity nor unity of action; and your great power of the past has been the creation of some unique character who dominated all about him and was himself a main impulse in some action that filled the play from beginning to end.[1]

Yeats' interpretation of The Silver Tassie, though it be accurate on several counts, is inappropriate, misdirected. Despite warnings from O'Casey himself as to the Tassie's experimental nature,[2] Yeats seems to have been intent upon, among other things, another Juno, some character who might hold the dramatic focus and rule the stage with an iron-fisted appeal. That the play has no Juno-like figure is readily ascertainable, is indeed frankly admitted by the playwright himself. But O'Casey's scenario, while affording a panoramic view of human insensitivity and aggressiveness, still maintains a unifying principle: however distant the orbit may at times appear, the play inevitably revolves around the making and breaking of Harry Heegan's spirit. In short, O'Casey's dramatic focus is not truly weak; rather, his lens is wide, scanning the fullest range of human interaction pertinent to the vicissitudes of Harry's life. In this light, it is curious that Yeats disregards the nature of the Abbey's most recent success subsequent to the rejection of the Tassie: The Plough and the Stars is a play devoid

of a "dominating character" (as O'Casey himself points out),[3] yet a play that unquestionably works. More curious, and perhaps the greatest disappointment of all, is that Yeats gives a mere fleeting acknowledgement[4] to the experimentation he had anxiously anticipated.[5]

Yeats' other major assessment, that the play has no dominating action, is, strictly speaking, true; but his opinion surely presumes the pre-eminence of conventional dramatic presentation, and disregards altogether the possibility that a play might derive concentrated force from a variety of devices, as The Plough does. Much of the force in The Tassie results from a functional contrapuntal structure. The Silver Tassie depicts a number of interpersonal struggles superimposed upon an international conflict. Such a framework allows O'Casey to play off the real horrors of war against the slight but almost equally regrettable pettiness of civilian vanity, jealousy, greed and fanaticism. Moreover, the discontinuity which Yeats observed can be viewed quite differently. Act one's variety of confrontations and competitions, for example, though they already fashion a modicum of righteousness and self-patriotism, do not gain their full measure of pettiness until the massive howitzer gun and battlefield drudgery of act two are brought to bear: first-hand view of the implements and victims of world war actually forces a reassessment of the preceding skirmishes in the parlour. In apparent disunity there is, in fact, symbiosis. The acts may not flow smoothly together (which could account for Yeats' claim that they are "unrelated"), but their logic and sequence is unmistakable: the gaps should not mystify but rather engage the audience who must bridge them. Each act is a kind of

Brueghelian detail, telling its own story while contributing to a larger picture. In short, that the play is episodic does not finally preclude its unity of action.

Again, Yeats is accurate when he claims that the war "obtrudes itself upon the stage;"[6] but so it must if O'Casey is to capture and lament its power to exacerbate human aggressiveness and insensitivity. More importantly, O'Casey tacitly suggests that endemic aggressiveness plays a certain role in supporting, even actuating aggression on a large scale. While the civilians in act one are not demonstrably jingoistic, they do harbour a spirit of conflict or competition and they are imitative of Barney and particularly Harry, the war's likeliest heroes. It is a society not only fraught with aggressiveness but all manner of over-zealous worshippers as well. The idolatrous civilians hold a superficial conception of war partly because Harry's own view is rose-coloured. Indeed, the civilian insensitivity accruing from that misconception develops a sophisticated lethality of its own, hence Shaw's comment on The Silver Tassie that "the hitting gets harder and harder right through to the end."[7] The war itself, contrary to Yeats' remark, has "become mere background" in the later acts: depicting "the mere [sic] greatness of the world war" is, for O'Casey, the obvious preliminary to focussing on the wide wake of destruction, the plight and treatment of war's human debris.

Yeats' judgement of The Silver Tassie stems from a rigid preconception of the ingredients for a successful O'Casey play. The play, however, features an unprecedented structure and style which automatically call into question the applicability of Yeats' dramatic formulae.

I submit that an appreciation of O'Casey's ability and a test of the play's success, may be facilitated by a rudimentary analysis of language wherein the play's style and structure will be seen to justify themselves. It is an analysis which Yeats himself apparently did not attempt or consider important, but one which a play of such density demands: for, it is largely through the diction, the tone and rhythm of the language, and through certain innovative strategies of dialogue that O'Casey refines his development of theme and character, and ultimately brings forth a cohesive play. Indeed, a detailed examination of language will clearly show pervasive themes and unity of action where Yeats evidently saw little or nothing.

Only in retrospect, as it has been intimated, is act one seen to depict an inverted world where the very "sacredness of life"[8] is often of lesser importance than the pretentious local quest for intellectual and social superiority, divine and monetary salvation: O'Casey must delay the audience's full awareness of civilian insensitivity if the comic foreground is to be maintained, and if the force of Harry's physical tragedy is to be maximized. That is why act one, in general, features characters fraught with what appear to be foibles. The fast pace, the predominant mood of victory and celebration help to prevent any solidly negative impressions of individuals from taking root: no one is truly despicable though altruistic tendencies are apparent only after provision has been made for the gratification of one's own desires. This strategy is most easily perceived in the spirited interplay of Sylvester Heegan and Simon Norton, each of whom offers hints of the empty altruism, inflated zeal and ugly self-

interest which flourish among the civilians in the latter acts, and which will be instrumental in the destruction of Harry's spirit. Misleading in its humour, deceptive in its innocuousness, the word-war waged by Simon and Sylvester runs throughout the play and, to a certain extent, resembles the battle of vocabularies between Michael Marthraun and Sailor Mahan in the later Cock-a-doodle Dandy. Initially, the intellectual rivalry between the pair may well be seen as a source of comedy; their animated dialogue, replete with bulls and incorrect usages, gains the sympathy of the audience, particularly as the two cronies, between silly personal disputes, band together to repulse the pretentious evangelism of Susie Monican. Thus, when their engrossing arguments cause them to ignore a few easy responsibilities -- care of Teddy's steak and some genuine consideration for the vigilant Mrs. Heegan -- a stubborn affection for the pair prevails and they are willingly forgiven. Their selfish monopoly of the warmest spots by the fire is similarly pardonable as it can be imputed to the innocent laziness and complacent patriarchal mentality of workingmen nearing retirement. Though their actions at this early stage cannot be condoned, neither can they be explicitly condemned.

In act three, however, their behaviour becomes blatantly insensitive, especially as it occurs amid the despairing and the invalid rather than the victorious and the proud. Their insensitivity gains sharper focus as Harry does not verbally respond to statements and actions which, in their callousness, should affect him most. Sylvester and Simon become the vital cogs in a brutal dramatic irony which sees Harry intent upon his forsaken state, only to miss the

ugliness that surrounds him (III, 81). The comic interplay between Simon and Sylvester thereafter receives from the audience an increasingly tempered response. Indeed, in the final act, the audience is encouraged to sever what were affectionate ties with the pair. Simon and Sylvester, perhaps at their funniest, have nevertheless become hopelessly unfeeling, imperceptive, and worst of all, oblivious to any wrongdoing. Memories of bygone buffoonery become tainted; and although audience sympathy for the two unfortunate war veterans is, by this time, not without reservation, it still prevails insofar as Harry and Teddy fail to receive a profound allegiance from the two men who should naturally render it.

The initial comic appeal of Sylvester and Simon, and the subsequent impact of their unfortunate insensitivity, depend on their pretensions to bravery, manliness and intellect. One need not wait for the hospital antics of act three to deduce that neither of the two bristles with courage; their initial encounter with Teddy Foran (indeed, non-encounter is closer) tells the tale well enough: Sylvester "cows" Teddy about as effectively as "the tidy little man with his fists" (I, 34) teaches his opponent a lesson. However, with the exception of the Teddy Foran incident, the two veterans of the docks (especially the father of the local hero) rather predictably maintain a public show of pluck, a spirit of pugnacity. Of course, the pair, all the while, remain safely ineligible for active service. Indeed, when Sylvester gallantly cries out that he will carry Harry's kit-bag, and Simon, in turn, rushes forth to lead the departing troops, Tassie in hand, each is, in retrospect, subject to the same angry rebuke

dealt the Visitor by the First Soldier in act two:

> Furiously feeling he's up to the neck in
> The whirl and the sweep of the front-line fighting.
> (II, 54)

Affecting key roles on the soccer pitch and battlefield alike, the pre-eminent cowards, Sylvester and Simon, fight a full-scale mock-war within the professed confines of "the quietness of a sensible conversation."(I, 23) Appropriately, their first major discussion not only centres on a dispute but also develops into one. Sylvester, bobbing and weaving to avoid the imaginary punches of Constable 63 C, derives vicarious pleasure from assuming the role of his son in a previous brawl. Earlier querulous over Susie's "tambourine theology," the elder Heegan himself delivers a rhythmic account of the fisticuffs, an account which falls easily into verse form:

> An' the hedges by the road-side
> Standin' stiff in the silent cold of the air,
> The frost beads on the branches
> Glistenin' like toss'd-down diamonds
> From the breasts of the stars,
> The quietness of the night
> Stimulated to a fuller stillness
> By the mockin' breathin' of Harry,
> An' the heavy, ragin' pantin' of the Bobby,
> An' the quickenin' beats of our own hearts afraid,
> Of hopin' too little or hopin' too much.
> (I, 24; my versification)

The excited alliteration, the heightened descriptions, the aspirate quality of speech (particularly the effect created by "mockin' breathin'," "ragin' pantin'," and "hopin'. . . hopin' . . .") combine to give Sylvester's relation a hypnotic appeal. It is a comic hymn in praise of his son, a hymn marked favourably by a proud father's

engrossment and kinaesthetic stimulation. But Sylvester's theatrical presentation glosses over the exaltation of an essentially violent act. Moreover, Sylvester successfully creates the illusion (as one might reasonably expect of mock-heroic recitation) that he himself, not Harry, has "punched the fear of God" into the heart of the policeman. In reliving the battle fought by his son, the father eloquently informs the world that Sylvester Heegan is not only physically capable of handling himself in any confrontation, but can also wax poetical, and will make every effort in future to impress his mate.

Simon, albeit, has a few rhetorical tricks of his own. When, for example, Sylvester is twice required to interrupt his reminiscence of Harry's exploits so that the "gospel gunner" might momentarily be stifled, Simon is quick to regain the upper hand in the conversation by interjecting athletic or pugilistic highlights of the younger Heegan's youth (I, 23-24; 24-25). Simon is less successful, though, when Sylvester, apparently groping for a particular word to fit the sense of his sentence, rejects Simon's suggestion ("appropriate") in favour of his own ostensibly spontaneous improvement ("exhilaratin'"; I, 30). Sylvester has doubtless pre-set the snare, for Simon had just previously accepted his mate's own verbal recommendation ("Jars on you") under similar circumstances.

Certain rhetorical techniques are employed by both men. From the outset, Sylvester and Simon use the expression "mind you" in much the same way Michael Marthraun and Sailor Mahan use the common vocative, "man," in Cock-a-doodle Dandy: in either case, the expression implies mild disparagement and a superior wisdom in the speaker. In the

Tassie, Simon wields this particular weapon more frequently though ultimately with mixed success and not without a partial betrayal of his own intellectual pretension. For example, Simon holds his own against his mate's impassioned account when he manages to refine Sylvester's description of Harry befuddling the policeman:

> Sylvester: I can see him yet[. . .] glidin' around the dazzled Bobby, cross-ey'd tryin' to watch him.
>
> Simon: [. . .] Unperturbed, mind you, all the time. (I, 24)

But Simon has inadvertently paved the way for Sylvester's winning histrionics (vide p. 16) which finally overwhelm Simon's careful refinements and polysyllabic volleys. "Mind you," "man," and other similar expressions repeatedly herald pedantic or inflated expostulation; for Sylvester and Simon, they are small but useful weapons in mock warfare's capacious armoury.

All foibles aside, it may fairly be said that despite Simon's "minor effort towards self-education" and his "natural but very slight superior nimbleness of mind" (I, 21), Sylvester frequently outmanoeuvres his friend, allowing rhetorical strategy to make amends for deficiencies in erudition and originality. This is clearly the case following the evenly matched theological/psychoanalytical debate over Susie. After Simon dismisses the possibility that Susie's soul-hunting is an "avocation," Sylvester slyly scavenges from the rejected theory in offering his own idea -- "Adoration" (I, 31). Sylvester doubtless revels in Simon's puzzlement ("What?"), for the elder statesman was just previously forced to draw on his friend's expertise

to interpret a technical word ("cockatrice . . . that term of approbation"). Sylvester goes on to register a double victory; not only is his theory plausible, but he also successfully affects an air of wisdom in qualifying Simon's nebulous reactions to the situation:

> Simon: Strange, strange.
>
> Sylvester: Oh, very curious, Simon.
>
> Simon: It's a problem, I suppose.
>
> Sylvester: An inconsolable problem, Simon.
> (I, 31)

Ironically, the problem of "adoration" inherent in Susie will be seen to lie strongest with Sylvester himself. Sylvester adores Harry and yet, as has been intimated, the adoration of his son is a thin cover for the fulsome celebration of himself. Notwithstanding several conversations with Simon about Harry (one of which has already been interpreted as an exercise in vicarious pleasure; vide p.16), Sylvester's direct verbal exchanges with his son are restricted to a few curt lines. Like Johnny Boyle in Juno, Harry has a father in blood only.

The extent of O'Casey's subtlety with verbal ironies and devices contributing to unity -- subtleties which, in subsequent instances, will carry increased thematic importance -- can be measured in another seemingly inconsequential interchange originating in the Police Constable episode. Simon, it will be remembered, insists that Harry finished off the Bobby with "a right-handed hook . . ." while Sylvester just as forcefully claims that the coup de grace was the left hook. Susie's persistent badgering at this point apparently halts

what might otherwise have been an interminable argument; but the left/right dispute, temporarily dormant, in fact resumes on a much subtler plane. Simon, whose sense of justice is subsequently overtaxed by the violence upstairs in the Foran household, shrugs off warnings to his person with

> Phuh, I'll keep him [Teddy] off with the left and hook him with the right.
>
> (I, 34; my italics)

Sylvester almost immediately counters with what looks to be merely a vote of confidence:

> Simon . . . would make Teddy Foran feel giddy if he got home with his left hook.
>
> (I, 34; my italics)

The war of one-upmanship between Sylvester and Simon, whether or not it holds the public focus, inevitably continues. After a considerable passage of time, still the two are tacitly, perhaps even subconsciously, reiterating the way they saw that unforgettable fight. The truly unforgettable fight is yet to come, however: in the wake of international conflict, this silly civil dispute, the weightiest of their verbal tug-of-wars, will appear insignificant in its pettiness yet meaningful in its reflection of endemic aggressiveness.

Whereas the initial verbal encounters of Simon and Sylvester present numerous intimations of ugliness, the so-called gospel gunnery of Susie Monican is, in some senses, more immediately provocative and yet it, too, must wait for the closing acts in order that the fullest implications of her words can be understood. Susie's personal war against sin, deemed the result of sexual rejection,[9] is a source of much raucous comedy in the first act. O'Casey, however, though

superfically concerned with evangelical deflation, goes beyond simple satire in his treatment of Susie. In the end, the playwright does not expressly ridicule her zeal as much as he laments how Susie's total preoccupation with role-playing (from fundamentalist to Florence Nightingale) destroys her normal ability to feel, to perceive. Susie may exude a fire and brimstone brand of passion, but essentially she is unfeeling, insensitive, and possesses a distorted moral sense. In the first act, she simultaneously preaches peace and polishes weapons. She is, nevertheless, more pitiable than damnable here for she clearly senses no contradiction in her moral and religious stands. In act three, her role changes but her sensibilities do not: any expression of genuine emotion in the hospital ward becomes suspect as Susie repeatedly shows that her disposition is inordinately professional, that her concern for Harry or any other patient is necessary only insofar as it reflects her own efficiency as a nurse. Susie's moral recapitulation in the final act begins in ironic Čapekian tones; her words, substantiated by her prior actions, are those of a robot:

> . . . If you'd passed as many [patients] through your hands as I, you'd hardly notice one.[10]
>
> (IV, 105)

The rest is a sermon bereft of the old religious trappings and, moreover, one far too heavy-handed to be accepted singularly as the playwright's own sentiments, particularly in light of O'Casey's prior treatment of Susie. Though providing an accurate summary of humanity's plight and duty in the aftermath of war, her speech is deceptively wrongheaded, is indeed an effluvium of self-righteousness and sanctimony. War has indeed wrought horrible physical destruction; but

Susie's speech (abetted by the ensuing song and a final inane comment) surely represents O'Casey's most savage irony, for it points to the blackest of truths. War has left Susie with a cold Darwinian mentality; she, in turn, leaves a sense that none can satisfactorily penetrate war's tragedy who have not truly partaken of war.

O'Casey uses a wide variety of linguistic techniques to reveal Susie's character in her first role. Most noticeable in her dialogue is the frequency with which she quotes from, alludes to, or uses the archaic diction of the Bible. From the outset, however, there is difficulty in determining the breadth of O'Casey's intentions: is he simply recreating the language of a thoroughgoing evangelist to provide a comic contrast for Sylvester and Simon? Do particular biblical quotations and allusions themselves contain verbal or structural ironies within the context of the play? Is the audience, in fact, invited to recall the basic biblical context of Susie's quotations in order that they perceive additional ironic contrast to the dramatic storyline? A case can certainly be made for the first two instances, and indeed, the possibility of the third exists not only on the strength of O'Casey's thorough familiarity with the Bible but also in the fact that the fundamental technique is not a new one. The Beggar's Opera, where Gay develops similarly complex ironies by drawing on London street ballads for his arias, is one case in point. Whether or not O'Casey, by the mid-twenties, was aware of this technique used by Gay, or even the opera itself, is not crucial; more importantly, the literary precedent makes the very suggestion of such a strategy no longer far-fetched.[11]

Susie's first borrowing from the Bible, her first major piece of dialogue in the play, is most provocative for it harbours the only instance in act one of a serious (albeit small) deviation from the biblical source.[12] Susie may paraphrase the Good Book from time to time, but not until the Croucher's obvious inversions of Ezekiel in act two does the playwright radically alter any biblical relation. For this reason alone (though indeed O'Casey's facility with the Bible should not be forgotten) the reader may judge out of hand that "Man walketh in a vain shadow . . . " (cf. Psalms: 39.6 -- read "show" for "shadow") is not the misquotation of a playwright working from memory. It is more likely that O'Casey is instructing his audience to suspect the motives of this avid fundamentalist who bungles her own specialty straight off. On closer scrutiny, the substitution of "shadow" for "show" has more far-reaching implications. Normally a simple, even trite declamation in its correct biblical form, Susie's chanted warning broadens into a thematically apt portent. Aside from its intended castigation of the men's excessive pride in Harry's achievement, Susie's "vain shadow" foretells of how self-interest will hide people from each other and thwart communication.[13] "Shadow" further connotes impending danger[14] -- the futile, empty, dark existence of act two's veterans, under the shadow of the ominous howitzer and amid what Croucher virtually calls the valley of the shadow of death. Finally, Psalm 39, from which the lines are borrowed, is significantly one of the initial hymns intoned during the Feast of All Souls, the most renowned of the Catholic requiem masses. In fact, Susie's line is totally bereft of life, be it interpreted as a hackneyed evangelical

reprimand or a distant but discernible death knell. O'Casey's skill is formidable: a slight biblical blunder, appropriate in its own deflationary function, more importantly carries considerable thematic weight at a remarkably early stage.

Verbal and situational ironies occur in many of Susie's ensuing biblical citations and may intensify upon recollection of the particular biblical context in question. For instance, with her aggressive proselytizing and weapon polishing already combining to damage her credibility, the audience can sense that Susie might well heed her own warning to the men: "an account of every idle word shall be given at the last day" (I, 24; cf. Matt. 12:36). Should the audience recall even the most general of circumstances surrounding chapter twelve of Matthew, the irony of situation would considerably deepen. Verses thirty-six and thirty-seven of chapter twelve mark the end of Jesus' renowned "house divided" speech directed at the Pharisees (the sect that, throughout the Gospels, attempts to trip up the teacher on technicalities of scriptural law and interpretation). Though here, as elsewhere, Susie paraphrases Christ's counsel to the Pharisees, her accusatory methods are thoroughly pharisaic and ultimately contravene the Christian lessons at hand. Her insistence on "bitterness and wrath in exhortation"(I, 29) to ferret out the satanic forces at work in Simon and Sylvester is one of several quick-thinking rationalizations, but it merely reaffirms her self-righteous, indeed violent, single-mindedness. Susie's pharisaism emerges most blatantly at the end of act one where she apparently offers a moral dispensation to Harry and Barney: "The men that are defending us have leave to bow

themselves down in the House of Rimmon. . . ." (I, 41; cf. II Kings 5:18); Barney, however, quickly learns that Harry alone is permitted to touch the "woman that seeketh not the things of the flesh" (I, 42). This final demonstration damages Susie's credibility irreparably, and corroborates Sylvester's comic psychoanalysis delivered earlier in the act.

The imposing theological aspect of Susie's character is perhaps partially inspired by Shaw's Major Barbara, a play which O'Casey saw at the Abbey in December of 1925.[15] Though there are, in each play, distinct differences in the approaches to soul-saving, there are interesting similarities as well. According to Shaw, the "triumphant justification of Barbara's Christianity" ultimately lies in her refusal "to play the hangman's game of Satan casting out Satan [cf. Matt. 12:26ff]. She refuses to prosecute a drunken ruffian; she converses on equal terms with a blackguard to whom no lady should be seen speaking in the public street; in short she imitates Christ."[16] While Major Barbara admirably imparts the spirit of her faith (see Matt. 12:28), Susie Monican too forcefully espouses the letter of hers, a practise which Shaw himself ironically called "sound Crosstianity."[17] Susie's imitations of Christ -- in fact she freely paraphrases both Father and Son -- though they intermittently sting the consciences of Sylvester and Simon in sequences of boisterous comedy, are presumptuous and must at least alert if not partially estrange the audience. Doubtless the spectator laughs at the verbal irony and self-apotheosis inherent in "Susie's warning" where she secretly fancies herself to be "the still small voice calling [Sylvester] to repent-

ance and faith" (I, 26; my italics; cf. I Kings 19:12). But the humour of this hangman's game surely blackens should the audience recognize Susie's very next admonition, a paraphrased portion of the Passion of Christ on the Via Dolorosa:

> The day will come when you will call on the mountains to cover you, and then you'll weep . . . (I, 26; cf. Luke 23:28,30)

Even if the audience fails to perceive Susie's hollowly literal imitations and implicit presumption, it can surely notice the un-Christ-like inconsistency in her commentary: a "khaki-covered ape," Susie's description of Barney, hardly bears a Christian stamp.

Throughout her soul-hunting phase, Susie employs several rhetorical tactics which are clever in themselves though ultimately self-defeating, for they alternately allure and appal the men. Warning them, for example, of the folly of an "evasion," Susie at once softens and strengthens her claim by finding the proper communicative tone: "You can't, you can't cod God" (I, 28), she says, perhaps consciously attempting to imbue her appeal with sincerity by faltering in her search for the right phrase. The idiomatic slogan she arrives at is neat, catchy, speaking in the language the men know and understand best. If not for her verbal and physical persistence, Sylvester and Simon may have come a step closer to "religion;" but, as Sylvester maintains, they will not be "battered," clawed" and "mangled" (I, 29) into heaven. Sylvester, who had already registered a similar objection ("people ought to be forcibly restrained from constantly cannonadin' you with the name of the Deity;" I, 24-25), would evidently differentiate between religious and secular violence, having earlier indulged in a

description of Harry's fistic encounter with the policeman. But the graphic diction in both complaints easily betrays the speciousness of his delineation, and illustrates more clearly than ever the universal mentality of violence which seems to surface regardless of one's "avocation." Meanwhile, perhaps in light of the men's counter-attack, Susie tries to change her tack, but the "exhortative" method proves too strong an impulse. In her final appeal she waxes vehement, elucidating the horrors of eternal damnation before simulating the devil himself:

> — an' there you'll be -- two cockatrices creeping together, a desolation, an astonishment, a curse and a hissing from everlasting to everlasting.
> (I, 29)

The evangelist is in full flight, horrifying her hearers with a series of sibilant snake sounds; but the appeal is altogether overwhelming, and the men launch into a comic etymological interpretation of Susie's pedantic terminology.

O'Casey does not waste the predictable hyperattentiveness of his audience during Susie's final emphatic appeal to Sylvester and Simon, just as he does not squander the natural curiosity in Susie's first few lines in the play (vide p. 23). Susie's threat to the men, namely existence in eternal desolation as cockatrices (serpents, we are informed, hatched from cocks' eggs), in fact represents some critical symbolic preparation. In act two, the murder of the "Estiminay cock" at the hands of Barney reportedly provokes a mood of desolation in the local hen house; but the Corporal, whose hoarsely chanted lament (II, 52)is superficially absurd, may be seen to be legitimately

mourning the utter absence of sensual joy among hen and soldier alike: that is to say, the forsaken hens reflect the desolation, the quiet desperation of the soldiers who vainly attempt to survive in some sort of comfort. Barney's archetypal "misdemeanour," a violation of the so-called "sacred . . . property of the citizen of a friendly state" (II, 52-53), points up both the silly sacrosanctity of the uninitiated brass hats, and the absolute frustration of the soldiers who are denied the simplest of joys, whose hands, like Barney's, are literally tied unless they be dutifully occupied with "ammunition transport" and the like. In effect, Susie's idle threat of damnation and desolation has become a reality for the innocent men in the trenches, and has been realized through the figure of cocks, and their perverse offspring, cockatrices. Indeed, the figure is not yet exhausted. In act four, Harry depicts his own physical and emotional desolation in what the audience, through Susie, has come to recognize as the hideous figure of the cockatrice:

> . . . stretch me on the floor fair on my belly, and I will turn over on my back, then wriggle back again on to my belly; and that's more than a dead, dead man can do![18]
>
> (IV, 89)

In O'Casey's war-hardened vision, there is not yet room for an omnipotent fantastical cock who might tie the hands of all brass hats, load the guns with blanks, or put the life back in Harry's legs. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see the playwright initiate a symbol that he will redesign twenty years later in a play of equal significance though perhaps narrower scope.

Several varieties of overzealous worship are evident in act one:

Susie's ostensible devotion to God and a veritably literal claim to the title of Christian soldier; Susie's love for Harry, her hero in act one, and the man indirectly responsible for her "scorchin' gospel;" Sylvester's ultimately selfish adoration of his son, celebrated most memorably in what has been referred to as his comic hymn. It is apparent that O'Casey employs stylized language -- ironic hymns, incantatory preaching and the like -- to draw attention to some flaw accruing from this staunch single-mindedness. Indeed, he does not limit the application of this technique to Sylvester and Susie. Mrs. Foran, openly brazen, celebrates her "doxological mood" with a ditty of adulterous joy:

> I'll be single again, yes, single again;
> An' I goes where I like, an' I does what I likes,
> An' I likes what I likes now I'm single again!
> (I, 27)

The security she derives in anticipation of social and sexual liberty is most curious in light of her concern for the family tradition in her "poor little weddin' bowl" which she claims she "might have had for generations!"(I, 37) -- certainly not generations of Forans. Mrs. Foran is a worshipper of idle pleasure, craving serenity and order whether they be found in the freedom of singlehood, the preservation of a family symbol, or the ukelele's peaceful "tinkle, tinkle in the night-time." Her inordinate desire for serenity is only eclipsed by her selfishness in attempting to secure the things she craves.

Mrs. Heegan, apparently distraught over the safety of her son from the outset, is repeatedly shown to be more anxious over the safe delivery of her "governmental money grant" which depends solely on

Harry's punctual return to the ship.[19] Before completely verifying her covetousness, however, O'Casey twice manages to generate momentary compassion for Mrs. Heegan as she virtually chants her present and impending hardship:

> Push to the right and
> push to the left
> till I get to the fosterin' fire
> * * * * * * * * *
> The chill's residin' in my bones,
> an' feelin's left me just the strength to shiver.
> He's overstayed his leave a lot,
> an' if he misses now the tide that's waitin',
> he skulks behind desertion from the colours.
>
> (I, 32; my versification)

The near regular dactylic and iambic beats, respectively, in these lines, accentuate Mrs. Heegan's straitened physical and emotional state. The second passage in particular has a sonorous, almost keening quality about it. Still, sympathy for her is mitigated by follow-up statements which gradually expose her ulterior concern, her highest articles of faith. The second statement above is seen in retrospect to be not so much the lament of a mother anticipating dishonour or bereavement, as the money-dirge of a woman who regards her son more highly for what he can produce than for what he is.

The last of the overzealous worshippers includes Barney and, more particularly, Harry himself. O'Casey depicts two soldiers in their final minutes at home celebrating (in the context of a sporting event) various joys of youth to which they are still accustomed. The greatest of those joys, sexual activity, is exalted in several conceits which demonstrate an unbridled and ultimately dangerous passion for the sensual. A pattern begins to form when the winning goal in the soccer

game is described by Harry as "a stunner," by Barney as "a hot beauty" (I, 40), both of which terms are easily acceptable as sexual slang. Shortly after the account of the game, Harry silences his mother's nagging with the proposal of a parting drink:

> Out with one of them wine-virgins we got in 'The Mill in the Field,' Barney, and we'll rape her in a last hot moment before we set out to kiss the guns!
>
> (I,41)

The sexual aggressiveness and bravado in this and other speeches, along with the risqué locker room dramatics in the middle of the Heegan family parlour, are generally congruent with conventional military mentality. Still, this kind of "double-meaning talk" that, ironically, Jessie warns against, points to regrettable tendencies in the men. Granted that there is nothing ostensibly wrong with labelling a brilliant goal in soccer a "stunner;" but Harry's explicit sexual allusions, however typical, colour and confuse the unfortunate issue of war, an issue perhaps greeted more resolutely, if bitterly, by Teddy Foran. Moreover, Harry is not truly expressing the gritty "when I go, I'll go game" attitude of the Young Woman in Within the Gates; indeed, with the overly glamorous account of war and interrupted love in the Silver Tassie song[20] (I, 44-45), one must wonder whether Harry has seriously considered the possible ramifications of war at all. In any event, O'Casey does strive to emphasize Harry's self-deluding attitude, and perhaps succeeds most when he blends sexual, military and religious diction in a single line of dialogue:

> Christ, Barney, how would you like to be retreating from the fairest face and [. . .] the trimmest, slimmest little leg in the parish?
>
> (I, 42)

All evident irony in the statement aside, this represents, in a subtle fashion, the ultimate confusion of worlds, a confusion perhaps enforced by the terrible war, but a confusion just the same. Clearly, Harry is still a child, and sadder still, a child with a lusty man's body. It is in this incongruous state that Harry goes, not to war, but to "kiss the guns:" war has been incorporated, for the time being, into a youthful, even orgiastic rite where men participate directly in sexual and athletic conquests, only remotely in military ones. The day fast approaches, however, when the guns will be worshipped ("kissed") in earnest. Moreover, the frustrated soldiers of act two will pathetically demonstrate that one cannot satisfyingly bring away "the breath of a kiss to the shell-bullied air of the trenches"(Harry; I,42): the discrepancy between the horror of the battlefield and the delights of the bedroom is too great. While The Silver Tassie encompasses the nightmare of world war, it views the greater horror of one youth's enforced flight from adolescence within that nightmare. Harry's faith in the sensual joys of life is to be rudely replaced by a bitter belief in man's inhumanity: under the most extraordinarily traumatic circumstances later in the play, Harry Heegan grows up.

Act two of The Silver Tassie, innovative in concept and language, is pivotal. In its stark expression of warfare's chaos and impersonality, O'Casey at once casts a deep shadow over the petty competition and self-interest among the civilians of the former act, and lays the groundwork for critical ironies which develop increasingly in the final acts. The diversity of linguistic techniques employed in act two fosters his complex objective and clearly attests to the success of

the experimentation. It is difficult to assess, in passing, the solitary remark of Yeats who felt that the act was "too long for the material."[21] Notwithstanding its length, act two is verbally and visually striking; indeed, J.C. Trewin's opinion that the act "is meant to be heard and seen,"[23] seems more appropriate than the claim of Yeats who, of course, did not permit himself the opportunity of witnessing the play until the Abbey produced it in 1935.

Whether or not he had read any ancient Greek drama before writing The Tassie (and it is almost certain that he had), O'Casey uses in act two several devices similar to those employed by writers of old tragedy and comedy alike. It is a choral act featuring distinct factions: the authority-wielding brass-hats and the lowly enlisted men. The on-going friction between the two groups bears striking similarities to that part of Aristophanic comedy known as the agōn. The sequence of similar actions may not be exact, but most of the elements are present:

> A ludicrous person appears with a brilliant and extravagant idea for setting the world to rights or getting out of some difficulty [cf. Visitor]; a chorus bursts in either in furious opposition or in enthusiastic support; there is a scene of violent argumentation or horse-play, calming down into a set debate (agōn); and when the conclusion of this is reached, the chorus turns to the audience [. . .] and delivers addresses to them which alternate with brief chants to the gods.[23]

The difficulty in establishing historically the influence of Aristophanic comedy on O'Casey does not alter the fact that the agōn-like form is ideal for the deflation of the Visitor by the soldiers and particularly by the Corporal. The Visitor's moralemongering and mock-heroics are easily repulsed by the irate chanting of the men and the

diverse retorts of the Corporal whose simple frankness frequently contributes to a searing, if not black, comic effect.

While the Aristophanic format facilitates the deflation of the Visitor and Staff-Wallah, the frequent stichomythic dialogue of the soldiers intensifies the battlefield drudgery perceived visually from the outset. O'Casey's richest use of stichomythia[24] occurs within the section of single-line dialogue during the Visitor's short tour of the Red Cross Station. The soldiers summarize their predicament, the denial of sensual joy:

> Second Soldier: And never a ray of leave.
>
> Third Soldier: To have a quiet drunk.
>
> First Soldier: Or a mad mowment to rustle a judy.
> (II, 55)

O'Casey appears to have taken simple clichés, namely "a ray of light" and "a quiet drink," and infused them with some power by slightly altering their structure. "Never a ray of leave" at once connotes the dark futility of the men and the utter impossibility of furlough at this time, whereas "quiet drunk" suggests the total exhaustion of the men while it anticipates the inebriated state they would surely attain, given the chance. The sporadic repetitiveness in the complete passage of stichomythia accentuates the monotony during, and delirious fatigue resulting from, ammunition transport duty, and provides auditory preparation for the ironic litany at the end of the act. O'Casey, in short, demonstrates the versatility of a device whose structure one might normally presume to be confining.

Harry's physical absence in act two is clearly deliberate, for it

intensifies the audience's subsequent perception that the actual change in his physical state is sudden, merciless: insofar as any concrete depiction of his undergoing hardship would reduce the awful speed of his fall and thus lessen the shock of his appearance in a wheel-chair, there must be no actual image of Harry with his beleaguered comrades before the fateful injury. By the same token, it is crucial that the audience be reminded of Harry's participation in the war and his exposure to danger in order that a certain sympathy for him should be retained. The presence of Barney contributes partially to the sense that Harry is somewhere close by; similarly, we are told, and would doubtless be made aware in a live performance, that the fourth soldier is "very like Teddy." But O'Casey takes further steps, not only to establish Harry's spiritual presence, but also to hint at (though never clearly foreshadow) Harry's fate. The playwright treads a fine line; with the use of sports-related diction, he feeds the curiosity of the audience without truly satisfying it.

The earliest point at which the audience might be directly reminded of Harry occurs in the passage of stichomythia already examined. The allusion is slight but conspicuous, for O'Casey twice uses a rather uncommon word which, nevertheless, has already appeared in a particular context in the first act:

> First Soldier: If the blighters at the front would tame their grousing.
>
> The Rest: Tame their grousing.
>
> (II, 55)

The "grousing" in the first act is attributed to the Primrose Rovers who, Harry excitedly claims, were unsportingly disputatious on the field

of play. Of course, O'Casey, in momentarily conjuring up Harry's presence through the words of the soldiers, also sets off the Rovers' trifling claims of foul against the bona fide complaint of the front-line Tommies.

Mention of "the muscled machines of Tottenham Hotspur" (II, 56) by the First Soldier bolsters the earlier football allusion and brings Harry into sharper mental focus. It is in the First Stretcher Bearer's chant, however, that the technique of ironic allusion begun by the word "grousing" is significantly enriched:

> Oh, bear it gently, carry it soft --
> A bullet or a shell said, stop, stop, stop.
> It's had its day, and it's left the play,
> Since it gamboll'd over the top, top, top.
> It's had its day, and it's left the play,
> Since it gamboll'd over the top.
>
> (II, 58)

The Stretcher Bearer jarringly describes the immobilization of men[25] on the field of battle in a kind of child-like song whose lyric bleakly suggests a recreational setting for the violence in progress. The mixture of military and recreational diction is reminiscent of the unbridled competitive spirit in act one spilling over into the realm of war. One might recall, for instance, Jessie requesting a German helmet from her sweetheart as if it were some sort of trophy betokening her capture of the town's leading male; or the final preparations before the return to the ship:

> Sylvester: I've got your kit-bag, Harry.
>
> Susie: I've got your rifle.
>
> Simon: I'll march in front with the cup, after Conroy with the concertina.
>
> (I, 43)

O'Casey's syntax here virtually depicts the cup and concertina as vital implements of war. Although in either case Harry's supporters are selfishly motivated, the act of blurring together the field of battle and the field of play is fostered by Harry's own euphemistic view of war. Indeed, part of Harry's tragedy lies in his inadvertent propagation of this distortion of war for, when the fighting is over, the "peace-white" civilians are ill-equipped to relate to its victims. The First Stretcher Bearer's chant, then, at once recalls and laments the hyper-competitive spirit ranging too far afield. The chant also embodies the first in a series of ominous suggestions of the end of "play" for unsuspecting soldiers.

The "red and yellow coloured rubber ball" from Mollie (II, 61), though offering a welcome relief from the soldiers' inactivity, suggests just how remote the typical civilian is from actual trench conditions. The ball might well have come from Mrs. Foran (the pun in her name being most appropriate here) who, just before the send-off, is totally immersed in her own problems, and after the war, shows less genuine concern for "the flotsum and jetsum of the battlefields" (II, 83) than for the "flotsum and jetsum" of a once whole china collection (I, 46). The ball may also have come from Mrs. Heegan, who ends act one with the shortsighted suggestion that the men have gotten away "safely." "A ball, be God!" exclaims the Second Soldier, plainly struck by the absurdity of a toy in the war zone; it is the same absurdity that the Third Soldier evidently attaches to his gift of a prayer-book, a commodity of much less value than "a bundle of cigarettes" or "a pack of cawds." That Mollie's accompanying message

entertains, in all probability, a facetious suggestion, does not restrict O'Casey from playing up the absurdity of her gift; there is poignant verbal irony in the latter part of her note:

> To play your way to the enemies' trenches when you all go over the top.
>
> (II, 61)

The First Stretcher Bearer's chant has recently made it clear what happens to many who go "over the top." Moreover, O'Casey is focussing on more than the potential danger to soldiers in general. The ball itself is enough to rekindle for spectators the image of Harry, though O'Casey sharpens the allusion by providing that the ball be red and yellow, the colours of the Avondale team. The message from Mollie, though ludicrous in its basic suggestion, reflects the kind of illusory attitude Harry apparently takes to war. O'Casey comes closest to foreshadowing Harry's fate at the end of the episode when the Staff-Wallah brings an abrupt halt to the football game in progress: as "all the soldiers stiffen," one might almost anticipate part of the Corporal's ensuing supplication and its implicit subject:

> [. . .] hours of merriment
> Cadg'd from the pageant-dream of children's play;
> Too soon of the motley stripped. . . .
>
> (II, 65)

It is Harry being whisked away from the joyous centre of one spectacle into the blackness of another, only to become a piteous spectacle himself.

In the brief exchange before Harry's entrance in act three, Sylvester and Simon offer a welcome relief from the foreboding of the previous act. Their war of one-upmanship seems to have been resumed in

hospital: Simon is still intent on superfine interpretation while Sylvester has comically adopted Susie's former use of biblical aphorisms in deploring her transformation from the impassioned "gospel gunner" to the passionate but coldly officious "Nurse Monican." Still the characteristic war of words between the two patients, and the predictable battles they wage against their nurse, must be recognized not merely as typical dialogue or comic relief, but as dramatic artifice. Subsequent to the entrance of Surgeon Maxwell, O'Casey is committed to a subtle reiteration of the horrors of act two, either through specific verbal ironies or by the ironic reapplication of linguistic modes. His purpose again is to maximize Harry's tragedy, primarily by effecting a harsh contrast between the petty verbal skirmishes of the civilians and the real physical war of the soldiers.

Harry enters in a wheelchair directly after a scandalized Sylvester pronounces on Susie's moral about-face:

> Oh, Susannah, Susannah, how are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!
>
> (III, 69)

Of course, Susie's fall from her high and mighty throne, and her exchange of the "scorchin' Gospel" for the "crimson cape" are trifling next to Harry, the mightiest of the fallen, the victim of a now meaningless weapon. Harry's appearance immediately undercuts the comic appeal of his father's moralizing and will increasingly inhibit the audience's response to humorous sequences. Should the sobered audience also recognize that Sylvester has borrowed a moving Old Testament lamentation (David on the death of King Saul and Jonathan; II Sam. 1:27) in depicting Susie's change, the irony in Harry's entrance would grow

more complex, just as the tragicomic tone of the act would become more firmly rooted.

As Harry wheels himself out, Sylvester and Simon continue to compete, trading remarks on the invalid's fitful nature; but, more importantly, they comment in a manner that clearly echoes the dismal stichomythic dialogue of the soldiers in the previous act, thereby re-creating the battlefield atmosphere within an ostensibly sheltered environment:

> Sylvester: Down and up, up and down.
>
> Simon: Up and down, down and up.
>
> (III, 69)
>
> * * * * * * * * *
>
> First Soldier: Cold and wet and tir'd.
>
> Second Soldier: Wet and tir'd and cold.
>
> Third Soldier: Tir'd and cold and wet.
>
> (II, 49)

In this instance, the word-war is more akin to the sententious blather of the Visitor in act two. The comparison is apt in that Sylvester, Simon and the Visitor cannot conceal an overriding concern for their own personal well-being; and just as the Visitor is concerned with military morale only insofar as it reflects his efficient discharge of duty, so Sylvester and Simon harbour ulterior motives, assessing Harry's physical and mental susceptibilities in order that each might boast a superior medical knowledge, a greater common sense.

At length, Susie's officious persistence becomes intolerable. Her two elderly patients respond by deriding the medical jargon and the genteel idiom she has probably acquired from her surgeon friend:

> Sylvester (mimicking Susie): Twenty-six, if you're going

to remeen in a comatouse condition, you'll have to keep your bed in a tidy an' awdahly mannah.

Simon: Dtch, dtch, dtch, Twenty-seven, it's disgriceful. And as long as you're heah, in the capacity of a patient, please remember I'm not to be addressed as 'Susie,' but as 'Nurse Monican.'

Sylvester: Twenty-seven, did you tike the pills the doctah awdahed?

(III, 71)

Though their target here is shared, Sylvester and Simon are still engaged in a personal struggle; this time, the key is to out-mimick the other with the use of absurdly pompous Cockney. But once again, O'Casey subtly undercuts the humour of the exchange, for their tone and idiom smack of some weightier cynicism in act two: the soldiers respond to the overmeticulous instruction of the Staff-Wallah in much the same manner (and for much the same reason) that Sylvester and Simon react to "Nurse Monican:"

First Soldier (derisively): Compenneemoy.

Third Soldier: Tray bong.

(II, 62)

In several other instances, Simon and Sylvester use words or modes of language that, though appearing in a comic context, are in some way representative of unfortunate people or situations in the previous act. Whether or not Susie could "mix the numbers up" (a phrase repeated six times) over who is to have a bath represents the strongest reiteration of the battlefield's repetitious language of drudgery. Sylvester's tell-tale hesitancy in taking the "plunge" into a bath perhaps not meant for him brings to mind the sham heroics in the perennial complaint of the Visitor ("won't let a . . . man. . . plunge!"). When

Sylvester is subsequently informed that his bath is steaming away, "full cock," he reacts as if he has been summarily sentenced; but the hot strength of the water is a luxurious punishment when compared to Barney's treatment after the theft of the Estaminay cock.[26] The bath being inevitable, Sylvester delivers his categorical condemnation of hospitals: if his comment illustrates his utter ignorance of the living hell in a field hospital, then his energetic "sitting up" movement (made just prior to his comment) heightens that ignorance, for the audience has been frankly informed that the Red Cross Station houses "all lying-down cases"(II, 57). In each instance, O'Casey manages to trigger unhappy if brief mental associations. The texture of irony grows coarser as the comic interplay subtly dramatizes the archetypal nightmare consciousness of the front-line soldier. For all intents and purposes, it is the psychodrama of Harry Heegan whose contemplative manner finally asserts itself in that terse, subjectless speech so akin to the impersonal military lingo of act two:

> Simon (awkwardly, to Harry): Have a fag, Harry, oul' son?
>
> Harry: [I] Don't want one; [I have] tons of my own in the locker.
>
> (III, 73)

Harry uses a similarly chopped manner of speech when he asks a woman to do the same favour he had not, in his pride, permitted a man to do for him:

> A package of fags. Out of the locker. Will you, Susie.
> (III, 74)

The syntax here is conspicuously disjunctive though entirely realistic; it excites pity in that it approximates Harry's own disordered physical

and emotional state. A sense of pity for Harry peaks as he dreamily articulates his condition:

> [I feel] A soft, velvety sense of distance between my fingers and the things I touch.
>
> (III, 74)

It is at once a resigned account of his inauspicious tactile impressions and a pathetic intimation of his desire for meaningful physical contact.

Surgeon Maxwell's musical contribution to act three lacks the deft touch that characterizes the majority of the play. His gay song, anathema to Harry whose loss of Jessie already appears imminent (see III, 69), is blatant foreshadow; it is a heavy-handed irony, too coincidental to be effectively hardhitting. The intensity that should develop upon sensing Maxwell's social preoccupation and medical casualness is curtailed as the overt irony in the lyric stubbornly encroaches and finally steals focus. The proper focal point is momentarily regained when the Surgeon comments on patient twenty-three in the aptly terse, depersonalized manner of the Visitor. Indeed, amid the callousness, Harry himself is selfishly given to grousing over his condition, thus beginning what will be a sporadic erosion of his heroic stature. But the song, itself, by which this ugly sequence is surrounded, simply tries to do too much and perhaps tends, unfortunately, to be bathetic.

In the segment featuring Harry's preoperative examination, O'Casey sets up one last significant allusion. The "buzzing" sensation that Harry feels in the tops of his thighs recalls the crippling weapons of war, the purported "buzz . . . of an aeroplane" that so quickly exposed the false valour of the Visitor. Harry's careful articulation of his

condition, however, comprehends a more unfortunate situation; for just as communication has broken down between the upper and lower parts of Harry's body, so a fundamental rupture has taken place between the civilians and their maimed warrior. The "buzz," deafening for Harry, imperceptible by the rest (save perhaps Teddy), betokens war's complete disruption of sensibility. Maxwell's hopeful concern over the buzzing sensation in Harry's legs is immediately given the lie by a display of sententiousness and callous indifference that almost justifies the exaggerated preoperative fears later expressed by Sylvester. In the final act, when Simon can only distinguish "a kind of buzzing and a roaring noise" (IV, 92) on the telephone, it is war calling in a voice not inaudible but rather incomprehensible. Simon, Sylvester and Mrs. Foran (and, presumably, the rest of the non-combatants) cannot satisfactorily interpret the language of war whose nature and whose transmogrified victims are so far removed from a "full life on the flow." The phone call, though a comic tour de force, is devastating in its near supernatural symbolism; and while it is preceded by some barbarous insensitivity in the later part of act three, the call is yet followed by a singular act of unthinking, indeed, instinctive depravity -- Barney's attack on his former comrade-in-arms.

As act four opens, O'Casey is intent upon accentuating that alien quality in Harry, as well as the extraordinary, often unwitting insensitivity among the rest, in order to demonstrate the sheer breadth of the chasm that has developed between the fit and the fallen. Harry is earlier distinguished as the "wriggling" "creeping thing," the veritable cockatrice with (as Jessie initially mentions) the killing

glance. His ugly incapacitation is subtly reiterated in the phone call episode when Sylvester yanks at the "knot or a twist an' a tangle" that is allegedly "keepin' the sound from travellin'" through the cord (IV, 92). The comment is not only reminiscent of the buzzing sensation stopped dead at the tops of Harry's thighs, but also suggests Barney's more recent description of Harry and his "tangled body" (IV, 88). Moreover, the harsh jerking gesture, together with Sylvester's allusive diction, hint at how the father treats his son: once an idol, Harry is now only life-like, as a puppet or, like the telephone, "a delicate contrivance that needs a knack in handlin'" (IV, 93). In this light, it is surely not coincidental that O'Casey plays on the word "manipulate" during the course of the phone call. When Sylvester encourages Harry to practise on the ukelele, he appears to have made a sincere attempt to relate to his son; but he renders his own gesture hollow as he (for that matter, everybody -- even the ukelele-loving Mrs. Foran) deserts Harry in favour of the balloon dance. That the whole group becomes veritably rapt in the most trifling of phenomena, the floating balloons, is, under the circumstances, inexcusable in its insensitivity yet positively frightening in its childish single-mindedness. With the puerile balloon commentary of Simon, Sylvester and Mrs. Heegan, the irony in the First Soldier's initial chant is savagely realized:

> Emmie a-pulling her skirt an' muttering,
> 'A balloon, a balloon, I wants a balloon,'
> The missus a-tugging 'er on, an' sying,
> 'A balloon, for shime, an' your father fighting:
> You'll wait till 'e's 'ome, an' the bands a-plying!'
> (II, 50)

From the beginning of act four, Barney's feigned civility is easily penetrated by his comrade whose clearsightedness is most evident in a bitter mock-chivalric retort:

> Barney (gently to Harry, as he gives a glass of wine to Jessie): No more for you now, Harry.
>
> Harry (mockingly): Oh, please, your lusty lordship, just another, an' if I seek a second, smack me well.
> (IV, 89)

But while this puppy-dog treatment of Harry generates audience sympathy for him (if indeed that sympathy is increasingly won by default), Harry's own self-pitying tendency negates his support: the audience is more likely to salute Teddy Foran's determined resignation to his particular fate. Teddy's explanation of his condition (IV, 94) exudes all the passion and vitality prevalent in Harry, but is plainly devoid of the bitterness Teddy once had, the bitterness still festering in his comrade. Despite the taut leash held by his incorrigible wife, Teddy has come to grips with his disability, and though he may long for a reversal of his state, he neither spits nor whines in complaint.

Though throughout the play the audience has been rigorously schooled in the mysteries of hero-worship, it is frustrated in the final act where there are no true claimants to heroism or even martyrdom; as Shaw succinctly maintains, "there is none righteous -- no, not one."[27] The audience might readily expect Harry to show some weakness in the face of the behaviour toward him, but it cannot be expected to tolerate the self-pity and melodrama with which his outpourings are occasionally tinged. On several occasions, however, it is difficult to know if Harry's histrionics are consciously intended by O'Casey to

further erode Harry's already weathered pedestal, or if they in fact show a playwright getting so close to his subject that the razor edge prevailing for most of the act is threatened. Whatever the case, instances of whimpering nostalgia, self-pity and borderline bathos always give way to Harry's searing bitterness. That lattermost quality he does not surrender until reaching a joint agreement with Teddy:

> What's in front we'll face like men.
> (IV, 105)

One cannot but sense that Harry is irresolute, that he is merely echoing Teddy's announcement, as a young soldier might sceptically repeat a last perilous order. Never wanting to depart from a world of youth, strength, and victory, Harry must enter the adult world suddenly and with only limited use of his once greatest asset, his body. While Harry's declaration, in its bare monosyllables and trochaic regularity, may appear to reflect the dogged determination of a hardened adult, his voice likely describes the quiet resignation of a well-behaved child; indeed, the interplay of tone and meaning allows the line to look forward and backward in time, to capture the tension, the paradox in Harry's new existence.

This final resolution of the maimed veterans is very close to the command twice given Job by the Lord: "Gird up now thy loins like a man"(Job 38:3; 40:7). The several parallels[28] drawn between Harry's plight and that of Job are of course deliberate, but there remains one stark difference: Harry cannot claim to be consistently righteous. After Harry and Teddy rightly assert the randomness of their injuries,

they proceed to "charge God foolishly" (Job 1:22) in their ironic echoing of Job's sincere supplication:

> Harry: The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away.
>
> Teddy: Blessed be the name of the Lord.
>
> (IV, 98; cf. Job 1:20)

Perhaps the only positive note in the play sounds when Harry finally lays blame where it is due, uttering a more rational if tragic explanation of his plight:

> The Lord hath given and man hath taken away!
> (IV, 105)

While Harry shows this first vital sign of moral and emotional growth, he simultaneously echoes a critical passage in the second act:

> Second Soldier:
> God, unchanging, heart-sicken'd, shuddering,
> Gathereth the darkness of the night sky
> To mask His paling countenance from
> The blood dance of His self-slaying children.
> (II, 63)

Harry's final line and the Second Soldier's chant reiterate a consistent theme in O'Casey's drama, a theme perhaps given its most forthright expression by Mrs. Boyle at the end of Juno and the Paycock:

> [. . .] These things have nothin' to do with the Will o' God. Ah, what can God do agen the stupidity o' men![29]

As has been suggested, Harry Heegan is not a purely tragic figure; he does participate in a tragic event, however, and by the end of the play, is on the road to realizing that he functions in a brutal society, one which he himself has played some part in forming. While O'Casey traces a sturdy young man's rise and fall, he more broadly demonstrates dangerous tendencies in a competitive, hero-worshipping society, and

laments the suffering in a war perhaps partly instigated by that society's most unscrupulous members, those "persons in high place" whose "stupidity . . . has stupefied" Harry himself (I, 38). O'Casey in fact deepens the tone of lament with actual excerpts from, or allusions to, various requiem services. These elements are discernible from the outset though perhaps not conspicuous until the second and third acts. The significance of Susie's first full line in the play has already been discussed. The Croucher's ostensibly mad harping on the month of November is probably an ironic salute to the month of Holy Souls (November in the Roman calendar) wherein masses for the dead are said with greater frequency.[30] The litany used in the ironic worship of the howitzer gun at the end of act two, lends itself to supplication and lamentation, and is in fact the form which initiates several prayers for the dying in the Roman breviary. The Staff-Wallah's fearful cry just after the litany ("Every man born of woman, to the guns, to the guns")[31] refers to a foreboding passage in Job also read during the Feast of All Souls:

> Man born of woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries. Who cometh forth like a flower, and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state.

The Salve Regina sung at the end of act three pathetically echoes Harry's own plea to the "God of the miracles:"

> Hail to the Queen who reigns above,
> Mother of clemency and love,
> Hail, thou, our hope, life, sweetness; we
> Eve's banished children cry to thee.
> We from this wretched vale of tears,
> Send sighs and groans unto thine ears;
> Oh, then, sweet Advocate, bestow,
> A pitying look on us below.

After this exile, let us see,
Our blessed Jesus, born of thee.
O merciful, O pious Maid,
O gracious Mary, lend thine aid.

Finally, Harry's bitter if slightly pontifical word play on the choice of wines is followed by some self-directed advice recommending a source of future sustenance:

> [. . .]Steady, Harry, and lift up thine eyes unto the hills. (IV, 97)

Those present also lift up their eyes, not to gape at what they consider a fallen hero but rather an incongruity, indeed, an anachronism. It is fitting, then, that Harry's words begin a psalm recommended in The Book of Common Prayer for recitation at requiem services. Harry is dead in their eyes, or at least he has outlived his usefulness in a society that plays and fights to win.

While O'Casey's dialogue in The Silver Tassie is, to the reader, occasionally forced or perhaps, overingenious, it must be argued that the efficacy of language is at least partly determined by the essentially non-literary elements working in the live performance itself. The volume and clarity of Surgeon Maxwell's song in act three, for example, will help to determine the degree of its heavy-handedness: if the lyrics were sounded softly (as indeed O'Casey recommends at the outset), and perhaps articulated imperfectly where appropriate (that is, while Maxwell is preoccupied with checking his clipboard and/or preparing medical equipment), the words which bludgeon the reader would properly add to the suspicion of the spectator who is already alarmed by the doctor's casual manner. The reader cannot but see all

the words and is surely tempted to make a perfunctory judgement of them, whereas the spectator, on hearing only snatches of the song, and diverted by Maxwell's conspicuous professionalism, will greet the episode less severely. With all this attention to delivery, I still cannot reconcile (as previously intimated) the problems that must be encountered in the last two verses of Maxwell's song where the overladen lyrics increasingly defy any sort of dramatic diversion. But rather than apologize for O'Casey's clear if infrequent problem with distance, I would re-emphasize that a fair judgement of the play, particularly this play, must give sufficient consideration to theatrical presentation and its modulating effect on apparently strained dialogue and technique.

The Silver Tassie's linguistic ingenuity, restricted not merely to what W.B. Yeats called an "interesting technical experiment"[32] in act two, must finally work to discourage a critical dismissal of the play. I have attempted to demonstrate that O'Casey's varied verbal strategies give the play coherence by contributing, with high consistency, to the articulation of theme, and poignancy, through a careful refinement of that articulation. The subtlety of those strategies is far from impenetrable though it apparently prompted Yeats himself to question the relevance and economy of particular episodes. If that subtlety has in fact given rise to Yeats' cryptic claim that the play is "all too abstract, after the first act,"[33] then O'Casey is surely justified in his heated response to the rejection of his play.

Chapter III:

Repression and Other Miracles: Language in Cock-a-doodle Dandy

Thirty years after he had argued in his famous letter to Yeats that The Silver Tassie was his best play, O'Casey claimed the same stature for Cock-a-doodle Dandy.[1] One hesitates to comment on the 1928 assertion, since choosing between the plays of the Dublin trilogy and the generically unique Silver Tassie is comparable to selecting between good but different tasting fruits. Indeed, the problem of generic polarity is hardly lessened when dealing with Tassie and Cock. O'Casey's later claim, however, insofar as it asserts Cock's superiority to Tassie, is perhaps more defensible though not simply because it represents the sentiments of a calmly retrospective artist rather than a frustrated experimenter and a then apprehensive family man.[2] If it is, in some respects, a less ambitious presentation than Tassie, if it is narrower in scope, Cock-a-doodle Dandy yet offers a wonderfully tight construction, a consistent integration of theme and language, and little if any material that Yeats may have considered an "unrelated scene."[3] Granted that O'Casey's diction, his use of tone and rhythm heighten comic and serious sequences in both plays; but Cock-a-doodle Dandy is finally a better play, primarily because the artist, as deeply involved and angered as he was in Tassie, is more deft and detached throughout.

In W.A. Armstrong's brief introduction to Cock,[4] and the playwright's own article entitled "Cockadoodle Doo," there are fundamental considerations of theme and symbol. According to Armstrong (who bases

several of his remarks on the playwright's own synopsis), O'Casey "is mainly preoccupied with flaws and anomalies in contemporary Irish life and culture."[5] Heading the list of social maladies is the propagation of fear and superstition by a pietistic clergy and by their various acolytes, among whose numbers are included the self-proclaimed mystic-moralist Shanaar, One-Eyed Larry (his understudy and possible successor), and the Sergeant who lends official, indeed armed, support to the crusade. Like the majority of his fellow townsfolk, Michael Marthraun readily submits to the stranglehold employed by Father Domineer and the much talked about Missioner. Sailor Mahan, on the other hand, only grudgingly yields as his nautically-grounded philosophy of common sense is eroded by, among other things, a continuous exposure to supposedly supernatural events. Notwithstanding their victimization by the clergy, neither Marthraun nor Mahan are exemplary in that the intensity of their avarice is perhaps only rivalled in ugliness by clerical repression itself: the lure of money is strong enough to depose even the superstitious fears that appear repeatedly to govern the two cronies, though their greed does momentarily disappear under the spell of a drink and a dance. At the other end of the social spectrum stand the undaunted among the repressed (Robin Adair, Loreleen) as well as those still capable of freeing the rope ever tightening around their necks (Lorna, Marion).[6] Pitted against the various "fostherers of fear," this group is headed by the Cock himself, who, as Armstrong says, "represents those instinctive and creative urges which men suppress at their peril, and [who] is associated throughout

the play with sexual love, poetry, music, dancing, laughter, and the sheer joy of life."[7]

In the language of Cock-a-doodle Dandy, O'Casey vividly captures that contrariety of factional idiosyncrasies which establishes the inevitability of social polarization in Nyadnanave and comprehends the real problem of depopulation confronting Ireland in 1949. The discussion to follow, must, accordingly, examine the language of the repressive and the repressed, the corrupt as well as the vital, in order to demonstrate the nature and efficacy of clerically initiated propaganda, and to observe the vain yet stubborn defense mounted by the pro-Cock delegation. While the lines of social conflict are starkly delineated and the sentiments of the playwright apparent, the play itself is no narrow diatribe. The regular reiteration of hypocrisy, greed, sanctimony, or vanity in Michael Marthraun or any other major target in the play might be considered irritating and heavy-handed, were it not for the innovation and diversity in the treatment of each character. O'Casey's depiction of vice and disorder is at times remarkably subtle; moreover, the ambivalent response commanded by key individuals in either faction sufficiently rebuffs the critical predisposition which underestimates the complexity of O'Casey's characterizations, the power of his language.[8] Finally, though a primarily linguistic study of Cock is forthcoming, it should always be borne in mind that visual effects, having played a critical part in Tassie, again co-ordinate closely with verbal techniques to develop character and theme. In Cock-a-doodle Dandy, fantastic occurrences, coloured

primarily by the utterances of Father Domineer's fearful devotees, help to define the disparate mentalities of the two factions; as Armstrong points out, those fantastic occurrences "illustrate either the mischievousness of the Cock or the hallucinations which torment repressed and superstitious minds."[9]

Michael Marthraun is almost immediately seen to be a classic victim of clerical repression. He spouts his superstitious fears from the outset, espousing in the process a rigidly puritanical view of temporal joy. In Marthraun's speech, O'Casey begins to suggest the intricacy of his satire, adding innuendo and connotative significance to dialogue by contrivances in diction and grammatical structure. For example, Marthraun straight-away labels his daughter Loreleen a "godless and laughin' little bitch,"[10] a syntactical arrangement which suggests that laughing, per se, is a godless, and therefore unacceptable act. Marthraun, soon after, attributes shameful thoughts and deeds to his own wife, accusing Lorna of "fondlin' herself with all sorts o' dismayin' decorations," of "dancin' in her mind with hefty lads, plum'd with youth an' spurred with looser thoughts of love." (I, 146) In this instance, his graphic aspersions, ironically featuring a pair of anatomical allusions to the dreaded Cock ("plum'd" and "spurred"), point to his own hypocrisy and suppressed sexuality, qualities which receive confirmation later in the act when his attitude toward women conspicuously softens. That revised attitude appears not to be ill-considered in that he provides the proper religious justification for it: " . . . we [men] must suffer th' temptation [of women] accordin' to the cognizances of th' canon law." (I, 164)

But Michael's subsequent playfulness with Marion (I, 165) confirms that O'Casey is punning in Michael's earlier statement; "suffering"[11] the temptation of women, for Michael, means gleefully if circumspectly "permitting" their charms rather than woefully "enduring" them.

Marthraun's hypocrisy flourishes even within the temporal activities that his narrow code permits. The avowed act of charity which he, as a good Columbanian, has performed, is early on seen to be a hollow gesture. His sponsorship of Julia's pilgrimage is transparently motivated by his desire to indenture the invalid's sister, his beautiful but penniless bride-to-be, as well as by a chance to capitalize on a bit of shrewd speculation in the turf trade. Though he would like to emphasize that his offer for the "scraggy oul' bog" is peculiarly generous -- he pays no mere sum but "fifty solid pounds" (I, 147) -- neither Mahan nor the reader is deceived. Marthraun's monetary interest, however, is not merely keen, but obsessive. Having unsympathetically heard the salary complaints of the Rough Fellows, Michael appears to be overawed by the subsequent commentary of the two men witnessing Loreleen's transmogrification; but a significant trace of the prior bargaining lingers as Michael fearfully asks Mahan if he has heard "what them two graspin' rascals said." (I, 151) Though he is totally intent upon the apparent black magic in progress, Michael might well have said "gaspin'" instead of "graspin'" but for his preoccupation with money. The utter inveteracy of his greed stands out near the end of the scene where at least one pecuniary pun slips unconsciously from his lips. Redefining his

stand on the salary issue, Michael insists he is concerned with the "principle" involved (I, 165). Yet, even during the calmer moments of haggling over the cartage fee, a war-like struggle is discernible. For Marthraun, it is not a question of giving but rather "surrendhering" two shillings extra.[12]

When he accuses the two Rough Fellows of greediness in the midst of a purportedly evil supernatural incident, Marthraun unveils a corollary of his avarice. Notice when fiscal negotiations between Marthraun and Mahan first degenerate into a shouting match, Marthraun knows his mind:

> Looka here, Sailor Mahan, you're not goin' to magicfy me into th' dhream of believin' you're not addin', every hurryin' week, a fine bundle o' notes to th' jubilant store you've there already, forcin' overtime on th' poor men o' th' bank, flickin' the notes into imperial ordher.
>
> (I, 148-149; my italics)

While he seems to be taking perverse delight in detailing an alleged overflow of money at his friend's bank, Marthraun, at the same time, flatly dismisses the possibility of being deluded by any rhetorical mumbo-jumbo in the face of this serious business matter: magic and money presently cannot be mingled. In a single sentence of dialogue, O'Casey strengthens the depiction of Marthraun's avarice and yet sharply defines the limits of his credulity at this early stage. When the elegant symbol of his political affiliation and social advancement, his tall hat, is reportedly destroyed (I, 160), Marthraun's vanity is similarly shown to outweigh his superstitious fears in that he risks supernatural repercussion by registering his complaint.

Later in the play, however, supernatural events temporarily force Marthraun to surrender his concerns for money and ostentation as he chooses to forsake his prize possession. In this comic sequence, O'Casey undermines the wisdom in the Sailor's advice to his mate by showing Mahan's stubborn common sense to be ironically regenerated by his own avarice:

> Aw, give yourself a shake, Mick. You're not afraid of a poor tall-hat. An' throw away ten good pounds.[13] (II, 180)

After the Sergeant's tale of horror, though, even the covetous Sailor is recommending that bystanders "keep well abaft" of the expensive hat.

Marthraun's final line in scene one (I, 168), a moving prayer for Julia's welfare, contravenes the tenor of pseudo-magnanimity dominant earlier in the scene and in fact encourages a reassessment of Marthraun since O'Casey's stage direction for the line does not permit the reader to let out the customary cry of hypocrite. It is true that the sincerity of Marthraun's compassion for his sister-in-law cannot excuse his profound greed and vanity; but by demonstrating this capacity for heartfelt sympathy in him, O'Casey quietly points a finger at Marthraun's repressive overseers who gradually accumulate a greater share of responsibility for the ethical disorder in Nyadnanave. Except in this one ingenuous expression of feeling, Marthraun's natural instincts are consistently overwhelmed by his acquired fears. Rank and power, attained through his own resourcefulness, have indeed made him wilful, headstrong; for these personal

qualities he alone is responsible. But the element of fear transmitted continually by the clergy not only fosters his own overbearing wilfulness and dogmatism but indirectly sustains his illusion that he is his own man, speaking and acting on the purest internal impulse. The fact is that he really no longer has the power of choice, or at least the power to discriminate between right and wrong, good and evil. Early in the scene, O'Casey illustrates this wilfulness subtly bespeaking an absence of self-determination in Marthraun:

> Looka, Sailor Mahan, if you aren't careful, your wilful disbelief in things'll lead you asthray! Loreleen isn't me daughter; she isn't even a woman: she's either undher a spell, or she's a possessed person.
>
> (I, 152)

While the lines comically point to Marthraun's own "wilful disbelief" in several inescapable facts, they more importantly feature the dangerous tendency of a zealot falsely alleging heresy, and show fear-inspired credulity rupturing the most natural of family ties. The break with Loreleen is clearly not a free act of the will but rather a fact predetermined by Marthraun's fear of losing his status (granted conditionally) as the "fair-hair'd boy of the clergy" (I, 147), and by his fear of being literally spellbound by his own daughter. In cultivating Marthraun's many personal weaknesses, clerical repression governs his speech and, save for the liberating effect of Julia's appearance and a later drink of whiskey, actually ordains his behaviour. In short, it is Marthraun himself who is truly possessed, who is the devil's unwitting disciple.

Sailor Mahan at first appears less impressionable, more truly volitient than his mate. He has evidently accumulated a good deal of common sense from his experience at sea, and though his wisdom is frequently lightened by comic nautical jargon, his mind does remain engaged in a serious search for the "significality" of things, apparently for the purpose of attaining an ultimate understanding or, as he calls it, a "close-hauled comprehension"[14] of life's problems. But with all his seafaring sense and initial scepticism towards the supernatural, Mahan cannot finally prevent himself from sliding under the repressive thumb of the clergy. As far as Father Domineer is concerned, Mahan's hard anti-literary stand, his status as a Columbanian knight, and particularly his wealth[15] establish him as "a man fresh for the faith, full of good works for clergy an' his neighbours:" (III, 214) his alleged promiscuity, on the other hand, is easily excused before the public, though it will doubtless be used to great advantage in the clergy's future cleansing of the good Sailor's soul. While Mahan does not directly fall victim to any clerical cant, Domineer's prize pupil does manage to wear away Mahan's common sense and slowly increases his proneness to perceive the mischievous stage antics of the Cock. The constant threat from without, however, does not alter the fact that Mahan is his own worst enemy. Though his ideas and actions may not initially be prompted by Marthraun or any other repressive influence, Mahan's temperament is almost expressly governed by his greed: the "scourge of materialism" has flogged him so ruthlessly as to render him oblivious to any personal injury. His greed, together with his

vanity and acquired fear, overshadow and finally supplant the common sense and kind-heartedness that he demonstrates early on. It is Mahan's spirited defense of the women at the beginning of the play -- a defense jointly motivated by true compassion and lingering sexual desire, though intermittently halted by female effrontery -- that earns him the sympathy of the audience while encouraging Marthraun's ungainly puritanical blustering. But even though Mahan's breezy equanimity and occasional nautical aphorism ("Nonsense, Mick; you're haulin' on a rope that isn't there";I, 144) are immediately attractive, they are, in retrospect, largely contrived to enhance his intellectual appeal. Mahan well knows that acquitting himself intelligently and commanding Marthraun's respect will, theoretically, improve his prospects at the bargaining table and foster a greater public recognition of his social ascendency.[16] Almost immediately, Mahan attempts to gain the upper hand in the dispute by addressing his mate with the implicitly condescending vocative, "man;" Michael reads the strategy, however, and defends admirably:

> Mahan: Loreleen? Why, man she's your own daughter by your first young wife!
>
> Michael: [. . .] Michael Marthraun's daughter! (Gripping Mahan's arm) Is she anyone's daughter, man?
>
> Mahan (impatiently): She must be somebody's daughter, man!
>
> Michael (impatiently): Why must she be, man?
>
> (I, 145)

Mahan is equally adept on the defensive. When Marthraun attempts to undo his mate's "wilful disbelief in things" by recalling the terrible tale of Widow Malone, Mahan is staid in his reaction, assuring his friend that he is familiar with the story: "I heard

tell of it months after, when I come back from Valparaiso." (I, 152) The matter of the response, however, is more significant than the apparently cool manner in which it is delivered. "Valparaiso" smacks of nautical name-dropping in which Sailor Mahan neatly suggests that he has weathered the toughest of storms, having evidently endured the voyage around "the Horn" where many a bold sailor has met Davy Jones. In other words, Sailor Mahan, at this point, is not about to be rattled by the most harrowing of yarns. The subsequent disturbance created by the Cock, however, easily invalidates his subtle claim to bravery and leaves one wondering whether Sailor Mahan is in the same naval category as "Captain" Jack Boyle. When implored by Marthraun to enter the house and capture the Cock, Mahan attempts to conceal his fear by regarding the request as an affront to his seafaring status:

> Is it me? I'm not goin' to squandher meself conthrollin' live land-fowl!
>
> (I, 158; my italics)

Here, in a sequence apparently divorced from money matters, O'Casey is inconspicuously developing Mahan's material preoccupation. Suspicions of Mahan possessing as severe an avarice as his mate are cultivated in an earlier episode where the Sailor begins contract negotiation by deeming Marthraun a "valued friend." (I, 148) In the present instance, though, O'Casey shows diction primarily used in a monetary context seeping into non-monetary conversation. Mahan, moreover, could not have registered his indignation in any stronger terms: surely "squandher," in Mahan's and Marthraun's dictionary alike, is as profane a word as "book" or, eventually, "Cock."

With Mahan successfully rebuffing his mate on all fronts, Marthraun surely welcomes the entrance of Shanaar who will offer support in at least one aspect of the on-going dispute. O'Casey's explanatory note on Shanaar ("a 'very wise old crawthumper,' really a dangerous old cod;" p. 140) is resoundingly substantiated by Sailor Mahan who, despite several agreeable moments with the old man, aptly sees him as a kind of ancient leviathan ("prayer-blower") spouting venomous religious effluvia everywhere (I, 164). While his spoken view of Shanaar is unrelenting, Mahan himself is noticeably discomposed by the unusual goings-on, particularly by the sounds that seem to accompany Shanaar's stories. But whatever the degree of Shanaar's success in "hindering the easiness of Mahan's mind," Shanaar knows his business and his subjects. To ensure that the august visitor receives proper consideration from the outset, O'Casey renders Shanaar's entrance both visually and vocally compelling; it is no accident that strong accents fall on Shanaar's first seven words, commanding the attention of the reverent and the sceptical:

> Gód sáve áll hére! Gód sáve áll thát
> máy bé ín th' hóuse, bárrín' th' cát án' th' dóg!
> (I, 153; my scansion)

Indeed, the bulk of Shanaar's lines features enticing rhythms and incantatory repetitions which plainly masquerade as reason, but which nevertheless give coercive force to his logic; O'Casey repeatedly harnesses the potential mystical power in sonorous and symmetrical language:

> Old is it? Ever so old,
> thousands of years, thousands of years
> if all were told.
>
> (I, 153)

* * * * * * * * * *

> . . . You might meet a bee
> that wasn't a bee;
> a bird that wasn't a bird;
> or a beautiful woman who
> wasn't a woman at all.
>
> (I, 154; my versification)

It is only a matter of time before Shanaar, like Marthraun before him, personally demonstrates that repressed sexuality is a common symptom of rigid puritanism. Marion's flippant remarks directed at the men prompt Shanaar to offer some revealing advice on the nature of women and the proper dress of one particular maidservant:

> Women is more flexible towards th' ungodly than us men, an' well th' old saints knew it. I'd recommend you to compel her, for a start, to lift her bodice higher up, an' pull her skirt lower down; for th' circumnambulatory nature of a woman's form often has a detonatin' effect on a man's idle thoughts.
>
> (I, 162)

Notwithstanding the apparent frames of reference in his warning, Shanaar's mention of the "flexibility" of women, their "detonatin' effect" on men, and the detailed rearrangement of ladies' garments suggests that he is revelling in the graphic detail of his description. Moreover, reference to the "circumnambulatory" tendency of the female figure -- a perfect "portmanteau" appeal to the sailor (i.e., "circumnavigate") and the landlubber (i.e., "circumambulate") -- is an unsuccessful euphemism which cannot conceal a certain titillation in the tutor.

As Shanaar prepares to leave the Marthraun residence, he gives

a final warning not to dwell mentally on recent supernatural goings-on. Then, evidently intent on making a dramatic exit, he does exactly what he has advised against, alluding at length to all manner of supernatural eventualities. The results are, of course, consistently comic, for O'Casey excels in creating this brand of exuberant fustian which Shanaar self-indulgently trots out. But beneath the humorous counsel lies Shanaar's deeper motivation for lingering. As far as Shanaar is concerned, Marthraun has slipped up, having forgotten the "value" of Shanaar's advice and the trouble taken to make the long journey to the turf farm. Bent on reminding Marthraun of those services rendered, Shanaar begins a series of "final" warnings (I, 163) which grow in complexity (and therefore, value) as Marthraun's apparent absent-mindedness persists. First he indulges in a high-flown concoction of Latin and English, advising that the house be exorcised, that is, "turbulenta concursio cockalorum, purified and surified . . .." Building his appeal, he foretells of danger in "any unfamiliar motion or peculiar conspicuosity or quasimodical addendum, perceivable in any familiar thing or creature common to [Marthraun's and Mahan's] general recognisances." Marthraun, the "J.P.," is no doubt impressed with such polysyllabic prowess; Shanaar may even be counting on the judge's rudimentary knowledge of legal jargon, for Marthraun might freely associate pounds and shillings with the term "recognisance." The next hint of Shanaar's intention is the least subtle. Yet again passing sentence on women, Shanaar has occasion to say "a man's measure of virtue is now made with money." Marthraun's positive response to

the fiscal substance of this observation is a good sign for Shanaar, as is Mahan's reaction to Shanaar's shrewd claim that the activity in the dance-halls is "completin' th' ruin." Shanaar, the ubiquitous town gossip, surely knows that Mahan's true concern is financial not moral ruin, that dance-hall activities may be adversely affecting worker productivity: it is known that the lorry drivers are in fact working to rule. (I, 152)

In the clinching bid to coax a gratuity from his patrons, Shanaar employs a bit of numerical mysticism:

> Don't forget that six thousand six hundhred an' sixty-six evil spirits can find ready lodgin's undher th' skin of a single man!
>
> (I, 163)

Perhaps this final display of wisdom, together with the impressive salvoes preceding, prompt Marthraun to reach into his pocket; or perhaps it is the rapid-fire reference to figures which further encourages a monetary train of thought. Whatever the case, Shanaar, with the persistence of an untipped maître-d'hôtel, finally gets what he wants. His acceptance of a shilling in lieu of a note is craftier still. Should Marthraun, in his growing admiration, offer a five pound note next time, Shanaar can still skim off a pound or two by accepting only a modest percentage of the offer. O'Casey cannot resist a parting poke at the old codger who claims a possible impairment to his "spiritual scansion," should he accept Marthraun's offer in full. While Shanaar skilfully demonstrates a talent for probing, with varying success, the minds and souls of his listeners, his spiritual insight much depends on that laughably unscannable but effective "killakee

Latin," a dialect of significant popularity in Nyadnanave.

Loreleen has a spiritual insight all her own, one which easily deserves, but does not receive, greater recognition than the hocus-pocus of Shanaar. Entering amid the preliminary monetary squabbles of her father and his friend, she loftily quotes the gospel of Matthew, mimicking the sermon-like tone which the pair are accustomed to hear:

> Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal!
>
> (I, 149; cf. Matt. 6:19)

Had Michael applied the "endurin' promulgacity of the gospels" (II, 171) in which he later claims to be "versed," he might well have seen her meaning, might well have recalled the subsequent paragraph in chapter six of Matthew, which amounts to one of O'Casey's highest messages for the men: "No man can serve two masters . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matt. 6:24) But Marthraun's response is governed by one or more of three circumstances: either Shanaar's warning to remain inattentive in the presence of a satanic force has taken effect; or Marthraun's "sagacity," sculpted by Domineer's narrow "promulgations," (hence, "promulgacity") has ironically caused him to mistake a sensible excerpt from the Bible for some demonic incantation; or, words like "corrupt," "thieves," and "steal" are simply hitting too close to home, forcing Marthraun to take shelter in Shanaar's recommendations for evasive action. There is sad irony indeed, later in the play, when an agreeably intoxicated Sailor Mahan picks up the thread of Matthew, momentarily discarding his frightful greed:

> Looka th' lilies of th' field [he says to Michael], an' ask yourself what th' hell's money!
>
> (II, 190; cf. Matt. 6:28)

Though the product of a slightly drunken man, the statement is rational, genuine, uninhibited by that spellbinding puritanism which subsequently re-establishes (and inevitably fosters) avarice in the men.

While bringing an important biblical strain to the dialogue, Loreleen also introduces a key word in her first appearance, a word which will carry a different value for various splinter groups within Nyadnanave's social factions. In a final rejection of the Rough Fellows' lustful motives -- she had earlier responded to the quixotic salvoes of one with some mysteriously attractive (but obviously cutting) gentilesse[17] -- Loreleen discharges the necessary sarcastic shaft, managing all the while to maintain her mystique and sustain their wonderment:

> I'm not for you, friends, for I'm not good for decent men. The two old cronies will tell you a kiss from me must be taken undher a canopy of dangerous darkness. [She kisses a hand to them.] Goodbye!
>
> (I, 150)

All irony aside, the word "decent," for Loreleen, might suggest any number of meanings, none of which apply to the Rough Fellows: open, honest, creative, natural, untainted by superstition or religious claptrap. While Loreleen's use of "decent" bespeaks her cynicism, Father Domineer's "decent" reflects his crafty pragmatism. Though he calls Mahan, near the end of the play, "a decent, honest soul" (III, 214) who leads "a decent man's life,"(III, 215) Domineer is far from satisfied with Mahan's behaviour; importantly, though, the looseness in

Mahan is not beyond rectification. "Decent," for Domineer, is as malleable as the individual it describes, indicating not so much an "absence of purity" but rather a "potential for becoming morally and spiritually erect," that is, for becoming a positive, contributing factor to the church, given the proper direction. For Mahan himself, "decent" becomes the all-Irish epithet, representative of the true-blue native disposition. The cuckoo, in Mahan's eyes, is a deceiving foreign species:[18] "no genuine decent Irish bird" (I, 155) would ever betray a countryman. Later, in a last ditch attempt to secure the blessed "exthra shillin'," Mahan asks Marthraun if he will "do th' decent for th' sake of the nation," (III, 207) and give him the rate increase. Here, Mahan cleverly implies that in his beloved Ireland, moral rectitude is typified by nobleness, generosity and the like. But the thin veil of nationalism cannot conceal either the laughable speculation of a chauvinistic ornithologist in the former example or the more serious avarice of a shrewd businessman in the latter.[19]

For Marthraun, "decent" predictably has more of a religious than a national connotation. To achieve that particular sense, O'Casey again chooses to juxtapose potential synonyms,[20] introducing Marthraun's meaning through specific syntactical arrangement:

> Go on; in you go, an' show yourself a decent, God-fearin' woman.
>
> (III, 203)

Earlier on, "decent" virtually establishes itself as the catchword of the puritans in an emphatic adverbial usage[21] of Marthraun's:

> . . . Go in, an' take them things, showy with sin, off you, an' dhress decent!
>
> (II, 188)

Granted that Marthraun's assertion of patriarchy in the first example has been spurred by Domineer, whose prior directives clearly invoke the convenient doctrine in Ephesians 5:22-23: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." But the harsh demand for obedience in the former example, together with the castigation of alleged vanity in the latter, merely reiterate the hollow rationalized religiosity, the true sinfulness of Marthraun himself. Considering his own inordinate concern for his tall-hat, Marthraun's anger over female attire is particularly hypocritical. It is suitable that chapter six of Matthew, of which the play appears to be a partial allegory, again ironically counterpoints the personal weaknesses in question:

> And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.[22]
>
> (Matt. 6:28-29)

Although Lorna and Marion gradually develop an affinity for the Cock, they are at the outset sadly representative of a town governed by the so-called forces of decency. Having observed the diverse antics of the Cock in the first scene, Marion herself unwittingly suggests the unfortunate error in the village's spiritual way of thinking:

> God forgive me, but it [the Cock] gave us all an hilarious time -- didn't it, sir?
>
> (I, 162)

Here and throughout the drama, O'Casey implicitly argues that there is no need in asking divine (or human) forgiveness for a bit of

hilarity, no cause for equating merriment with sin. But Nyadnanavean morality introduces self-consciousness into the minutest pursuits of pleasure; chiding oneself for temporarily "losing control" is as much a reflex action as it is the product of a natural sensitivity:

> Marion: God forgive me -- I near forgot! Here we are followin' laughter, instead of seekin' succour from prayer!
>
> (I, 167)

The reminders of one's proper demeanor in public are ubiquitous: extended mirth or mental enjoyment are quite out of the question, rendering the exodus of the "living" only a matter of time.

No one hastens the exodus of the living more than Father Domineer. Even in his brief appearance at the end of the first scene, there are traces of the unsavoury character that later comes to the fore. In his pronouncement designed to speed the progress of the pilgrims, one senses not only a dangerous theocratic assertiveness but also a hint of the misogyny that subsequently emerges as full-fledged sexual repression:

> Forward, in th' name o' God and of Mary, ever Virgin, ever blessed, always bending to help poor, banished children of Eve!
>
> (I, 169)

The final line of the scene, Domineer's hopeful prediction, is uttered "enthusiastically," according to O'Casey; but that enthusiasm is conspicuous in light of Domineer's reportedly strained and surly aspect on his entrance. While his initial failure to smile (combined with a somewhat curious concern for haste at a time when Julia is receiving needed reassurance from family and friends) per-

haps betrays some inappropriate impatience or even boredom, the wording of his final line clearly indicates a priest more interested in winning a propaganda victory than in demonstrating the just rewards of faith to his parishioners. Divine intercession, per se, is of much greater importance to Father Domineer than Julia's welfare:

> Julia will bring us back a miracle, a glorious miracle! To Lourdes !
>
> (I, 169)

Much of O'Casey's delicate skill with diction, syntax, tone, and rhythm is manifest in the comprehensive first scene, on which the preceeding pages have concentrated. Fortunately, stepping back from such close scrutiny does not reveal a mere collection of local wit and word play, but rather, a broad-based drama with larger concerns of language. The very first interchange in the play in fact marks the beginning of a vital trend. Marthraun and Mahan (like Sylvester and Simon in the earlier play studied) frequently engage in what amounts to a war of words, sometimes with an obvious motive, and sometimes for what appears to be argument's sake alone. Verbal contest, one of several important linguistic aspects in many O'Casey plays, is crucial in Cock-a-doodle Dandy and The Silver Tassie, both from structural and thematic points of view. In both plays, O'Casey employs various historical and literary sources in shaping the language of the final product; but whereas The Tassie relies strongly on biblical and military registers for the success of much irony and thematic development in dialogue, Cock features, and to a certain ex-

tent demands, a more eclectic base for linguistic stylization. O'Casey does, as earlier demonstrated, have several vital passages in Cock which are characterized by ironic biblical inversion or citation, but the subject matter and native setting of the play allow him to draw more substantially on Irish oral, literary and folk traditions with which he is thoroughly familiar. In Tassie, word-war between Sylvester and Simon predictably contributes to characterization and helps to suggest the endemic aggressiveness that O'Casey convincingly attributes to the civilian contingent. Ultimately, that aggressiveness heightens, and partially accounts for, the central tragedy of Harry Heegan. In Cock, verbal contest, which represents a good deal of the dramatic action, does accommodate the portrayal of two avaricious, egotistical and vainglorious men; but viewed in a full historical context, it adds another dimension to an already rich satire.

Marthraun's continuous contention with Mahan, notably the "earnest colloquy of betther men" at the beginning of scene two, is reminiscent of two traditional forms of verbal interchange. The "colloquy" itself was an important narrative form in medieval Ireland. Perhaps the most famous example in a comic context is "The Colloquy of the Two Sages," described by Vivian Mercier as "a veritable battle of wits if not of wit."[23] The participants are ollaves, holders of "the highest poetic degrees."[24] The other traditional form is called the flyting (in Irish, immarbag; later iomarbhaigh). Common in a number of ethnic traditions,[25] the flyting is defined variously though most comprehensively in an Irish context by Mercier who regards it as "something

between a contest in verbal athleticism and a boastful display of poetic muscle."[26] Certainly no shortage of these traditional expressions of word and wit are at work in the famous comic interchange between Marthraun and Mahan:

> Michael: She'll get what she's afther -- a complete cure. Me own generous gift of fifty pounds for th' oul' bog'll be rewarded; an' th' spate o' prayin' goin' on, from th' Mayor to the Bellman, is bound to get th' higher saints goin', persuadin' them to furnish a suitable answer to all we're askin'.
>
> Mahan (impatiently): Arra, man alive, d'ye think th' skipper aloft an' his glitterin' crew is goin' to bother their heads about a call from a tiny town an' disthrict thryin' hard to thrive on turf?
>
> Michael (indignantly): Looka, if you were only versed in th' endurin' promulgacity of th' gospels, you'd know th' man above's concerned as much about Nyadnanave as he is about a place where a swarm of cardinals saunther secure, decoratin' th' air with all their purple an' gold!
>
> Mahan (as indignantly): Are you goin' to tell me that th' skipper aloft an' his hierarchilogical crew are concerned about th' Mayor, the Messenger, Marion, me, an' you as much as they are about them who've been promoted to th' quarter'deck o' th' world's fame? Are you goin' to pit our palthry penances an' haltin' hummin' o' hymns against th' piercin' pipin' of the rosary be Bing Bang Crosby an' other great film stars, who side-stepped from published greatness for a holy minute or two to send a blessed blast over th' wireless, callin' all Catholics to perpetuatin' prayer!
>
> Michael (sitting down on a chair): Sailor Mahan, I ask you to thry to get your thoughts ship-shaped in your mind. [. . .]
>
> Mahan (plumping down on the other chair -- indignantly): D'ye remember who you're talkin' to, man! Ship-shape in me mind! Isn't a man bound to have his mind fitted together in a ship-shape way, who, forced out of his thrue course be a nautical cathastrope, to wit, videliket, an act o' God, ploughed a way through th'

Sargasso Sea, reachin' open wathers, long afther hope had troubled him no longer?

Michael (wearily): Aw, Sailor Mahan, what's them things got to do with th' things tantamount to heaven?
(II, 170-171)

This is indeed a comic colloquy. Moreover, the rhetorical tools characteristic of the flyting are in abundance here and in other confrontations throughout the play: appealing alliteration often in traditional sets of three,[27] emphatic rhythms in predominantly epigrammatic speech, virtuosity in ridicule, invective, and provocation. But Marthraun and Mahan, in this and particularly in disputes centering on money, are (as Marthraun himself says) truly in "earnest," whereas the flytings in medieval and post-medieval Ireland were primarily mock-battles, intense but purely rhetorical exercise. "The Contention of the Poets" (Iomarbhaigh na bhFileadh), for example, "the most famous of all poetic contests," according to Mercier, was "an elaborate sham fight, which several poets entered in order to show off their traditional learning . . . ."[28] In the argument cited above, there is no shamming: the would-be sages are sedulous in their efforts to impress and outmanoeuvre each other; their earnestness in fact accounts for the humour and the serious implications in the dialogue. Whether O'Casey's comic tour de force is ridiculing the men's virtual identification with the sagacious colloquists of old, or whether it is imitating the customary tone of the flyting with ironic inaccuracy, the results are the same: the men's vices, particularly their overseriousness, are set in the highest relief possible. Marthraun's sanctimony, hollow charity and pseudo-pedantry, and Mahan's elitist heterodoxy (which obliquely

justifies his materialistic drive), must indeed be animate in the minds of an audience which is simultaneously encouraged to lament and laugh at such a dispute. Moreover, the re-establishment of the men's unfortunate tendencies at this point is strategic, for if the Cock and his crew are to continue the assault on Marthraun and Mahan, the sympathy expressed by the men for Julia at the end of scene one must be immediately overshadowed. Of course, the return to their familiar pattern of behaviour is hardly unexpected: one might well have deduced that any display of generous feeling by the town's money-hardened leading citizens would be short-lived.

Disputation between Marthraun and Mahan is occasionally of a more scathing variety than the conflict in the so-called "earnest colloquy." This more heated kind of exchange (which could conceivably result in physical violence, if the two had a fraction of the intrepidity they presume to possess), always focuses on the near uncompromising issue of money, as has been earlier suggested. In scene one, for example, Mahan's unsuccessful haggling results in a reportedly vicious retort:

> Mahan: Make your offer one an' sixpence, an' I'll hoist th' pennant of agreement?
>
> Mi[illegible]: I couldn't. Looka, Sailor Mahan, it would ruin me.
>
> Mahan (viciously): You'd rather throw th' money after a tall-hat so that you could controvert yourself into a dapper disturbance th' time the president comes to view th' workin' of th' turf. Talk about Loreleen castin' a spell! Th' whole disthrict'll be paralysed in a spell when your top-hat comes out to meet the president's top-hat, th' two poor things tryin' to keep people from noticin' what's undher them! Two shillin's now, or nothin'. (He sits down in disgust.)
>
> (I, 153)

In scene three, Mahan's very last attempt to squeeze an extra shilling or two from his mate is ineffectual, resulting in a comic but poignantly satirical malediction:

> Mahan: [. . .] For th' last time, Michael Marthraun, are you goin' to do th' decent for th' sake of th' nation, an' give me what I'm askin'?
>
> Michael (with decision -- quietly): No, Sailor Mahan, I'm not. (He shouts.) I'd see you in hell first!
>
> Mahan (as he goes): A sweet goodbye to you, an' take a dhrug to keep from stayin' awake o' nights thinkin' of the nation's needs![29]
>
> (III, 207)

In either case, the primary tendency of the adversaries is to wound -- rather than impress or outwit, as in the flyting's mock warfare. Indeed, the mode and tone of these exchanges more closely resemble the bona fide attacks of the Gaelic poet-satirists who permeate oral and literary tradition from earliest times to the present (i.e. from the oblique references of Diodorus Siculus in the first century B.C. to the contemporary writings of the Scottish poet Hugh MacDairmid).[30] Several ironies accrue from this caricature of the poet-satirists, ironies which render O'Casey's own satire exceedingly rich.

Mercier intimates that notwithstanding their normal public function, the medieval poet-satirists, ranging in stature from the lowlier crossan or cainte to the learned fili, were, by the very nature of their profession, prone to internecine struggle.[31] Robert Elliott suggests that while the latter group, the filid, were in possession of the higher knowledge and played a vital role in the formation of pre-Christian Irish culture, they commanded a rather dubious distinction

in society,

> exacting hospitality wherever they went, making exorbitant demands on whomever they pleased. They could be refused nothing, partly because of the great prestige accorded their art, but chiefly because of the universal terror inspired by their satire.[32]

Michael Marthraun, "J.P.," purportedly imbued in, among other canons, the "endurin' promulgacity of the gospels," and Sailor Mahan, allegedly versed in the subject of "significality," specifically in the "whispers of wind and wave," are O'Casey's quasi-filid, the butts of an increasingly elaborate lampoon. Their frequent invective attacking a wide range of targets corresponds to the practice of their traditional predecessors; but the filid most commonly reviled "stinginess, inhospitality, pride" and the "inflexibility of those in power."[33] Of course, in these realms of vice, Marthraun and Mahan, of all people, have no business whatsoever as regulators. O'Casey ensures that his "satirists," in keeping with a commonplace in the tradition, expose their own folly. Such is the fate, for example, of Fingen mac Flainn in the oldest extant Early Irish satirical poem.[34] Indeed, like the fili Dallan Forguill in the "uproarious parody and burlesque of earlier druidic pedantry" know as The Proceedings of the Burdensome Bardic Company,[35] Marthraun and Mahan are subject to a higher canon: Dallan's satire, "being unjust, recoils on his own head, in accordance with the laws laid down by the saints of Ireland, and he dies three days later."[36] While Marthraun does not perish as a result of his unjust words and behaviour, his death is recommended (indeed, almost prophesied) by the Messenger. Mahan, on the other hand, leaving the

stage in a fit of greed-masking nationalism, is in effect rewarded with hell itself (Marthraun's curse; III, 207), having been shamefully pelted "back to his home an' proper wife" (III, 215) where doubtless his luffing "sails of love" will be ever so tightly refurled.

Perhaps the most ironic aspect of O'Casey's caricatures involves the relationship between satire and magic in Irish tradition. In the early Irish period, the language of satire "does not distinguish between . . . magically efficacious verses . . . and the real satire of a later, more sophisticated period."[37] That is to say, the word satire was for a time virtually synonymous with curse, malediction and the like. The Irish fear of satire, moreover -- a fear that extends at least into the nineteenth and probably this century as well[38] -- arose not merely from the probability of being verbally shamed but of suffering actual physical repercussions from one's shaming, namely, cuts, blemishes, discolouration, even death. Mahan and Marthraun have already been seen as formidable imprecators who, after the fashion of their more dangerous predecessors, would verbally inflict injury on their enemies, given the necessary provocation. Similarly, Shanaar, with his bilingual declamations, is thought to be "a positive danger goin' about th' country!" by at least one leading citizen.[39] But the man whose fiery words are, on occasion, all but consciously fused with magical efficacy is the same man who openly campaigns <u>against</u> evil supernatural forces. Granted that Father Domineer's standard, unembellished "satirizing" of his forgetful flock is enough to inspire fear and awe throughout the parish. To command extraordinary attention,

however, he employs an unusually evocative language, which amounts to either incantatory railing or ominous dog Latin:

> Cock o' th' north, or cock o' th' south, we'll down derry doh down him yet.
>
> (III, 212)
>
> * * * * * * * * * * * *
>
> Ubique ululanti cockalorum ochone, ululo!
>
> (II, 191)

In effect, O'Casey is injecting an ironic element of hocus-pocus into the priest's avowedly holy fiend-fighting. In the final stages of the play, however, the tendency is to regard Domineer's quirks of language (especially the inaccuracy of his Latin) less for their comic or ironic quality than for the serious force they represent. The magic in Domineer's alternate dialects ultimately lies in their power to spellbind and sustain the dangerous likes of Marthraun, Shanaar, One-Eyed Larry, and other lesser initiates. Verbal power is backed up by Domineer's own brute strength (tragically demonstrated at the end of scene two) and awesome god-like omnipresence, the latter of which O'Casey felicitously builds into his supernaturalistic scenario.[40] By the time Domineer pronounces his final "hissing" condemnation on Loreleen -- "stipendium peccati mors est!" -- one may well determine that the name earlier given to that superficially comic dialect, "killakee" Latin, carries no accidental pun. Domineer is death's harbinger, judge and executioner, a perversely apt trinity for the black-clad priest.

In addition to creating an ironic aptness in Domineer's incantatory "killakee," O'Casey satirizes clerical sanctimony by playing

on an age-old lingusitic ineptitude. Domineer's dog Latin typifies an overzealousness which attracted ridicule in Ireland more than 800 years ago:

> The saints of Eire long ago
> Wrought miracles this truth to show;
> 'Tis evil done to leave their ways
> For Latin speech in these last days.
>
> For every school will soon, I vow,
> Be following Latin learning now,
> Old wisdom now they scorn and song,
> And babble Latin all day long.
>
> The best of Latin has no might
> To stablish holy Church upright;
> We need pure hearts in these bad days,
> Piety, charity and praise.
>
> Latin ye love and take no heed
> To keep your hearts from evil freed;
> But when your Latin speech is done
> God's child shall judge you every one![41]

The third verse above is starkly reminiscent of Mahan's pronouncement in scene three: "It'll take a betther man than Father Domineer to dhrive evil things outa Eire." (III, 198) Moreover, the warning in the final two lines of the poem is implicit in both the Messenger's remonstrations and Loreleen's frustrated entreaties at the close of the play. But even though Domineer's demeaning "bitther blessin's" and corrupt Latin are lampooned throughout, they will remain an effective social control for as long as Nyadnanave tolerates a shame oriented culture. As Robert Elliott maintains,

> In any society in which high value is placed upon the opinions of others, ridicule will clearly be a potent deterrent to deviant behavior; the more a person dreads shame, the more he will avoid situations which might bring upon him the bad name conveyed by public mockery.[42]

Like the poet-satirists of another age, Marthraun, Mahan, but most particularly, Father Domineer, know in their own capacity the power and the consequences of shame.

It is possible to focus O'Casey's satiric treatment of Domineer more sharply still. Robert Elliott states that "in Ireland the most powerful of the cursers were the saints who uttered their maledictions on the slightest provocation." "St. Patrick," Elliott continues, "relied upon the power of the word alone."[43] Indeed, the ballads of the Ossianic cycle show St. Patrick's character to be significantly close to O'Casey's priest:

> [Patrick is] a sour and stupid fanatic, harping with wearisome monotony on the damnation of Finn and all his comrades; a hard taskmaster to the poor old blind giant [Ossian] . . . upon whom he plays shabby tricks in order to terrify him into acceptance of Christianity.[44]

Conversely, Ossian's character in the ballads is akin to the Messenger's, but more generally to the character and spirit of the entire pro-Cock delegation. Ossian is

> as a rule a pagan, defiant and reckless, full of contempt and scorn for the howling clerics and their churlish low-bred deity.[45]

Furthermore, he

> cannot away with the new world of which the Christian cleric is the symbol and the embodiment; he loathes the ascetic, churlish ideal . . . and he contrasts it with the delights that were once his, with the joy of a life wholly simple and unsophisticated . . .. He never wavers in his loyalty to the past; if his comrades are in hell, he is content to be there likewise.[46]

One is reminded, particularly in this last sentence, of the loyalty of Robin Adair, whose insistence on rustic simplicity and freedom

is as strong as the love for his girl: "I'd do a year an' a day in a cold cell of pressed-in loneliness, an' come out singin' a song, for a kiss from a lass like Marion!" (II, 174) In fact, the fundamental social conflict pervading O'Casey's play corresponds to the central theme explored in the numerous Patrick/Ossian dialogues:[47] what Alfred Nutt calls "the contrast of ascetic Christianity and Pagan joy of life "[48] is unfortunately a persistent issue in Irish and Anglo-Irish literature.

A word might be said about the prevalent misogyny in the play since a significant strain of anti-feminist literature exists in the period of Irish history from which O'Casey has predominantly drawn. Indeed, medieval Irish anti-feminism in literature "fits perfectly into a satiric tradition extending from the ancient Greek Semonides of Amorgos, through Juvenal, and into the Middle Ages and Renaissance, where anti-feminist attacks proliferate in startling abundance."[49] It is not suprising to hear the name of St. Jerome mentioned in an anti-feminist context (Marthraun; II, 192), for his attacks against women are celebrated;[50] nor does historical evidence of St. Patrick's misogynistic tendencies come as a great shock,[51] bearing in mind the numerous other personal qualities that his legend has concealed. Even the great Columkille was reputed to be wary of women;[52] so the detractors of the female species in the play have a wide range of high powered support for their prejudice. In short, fear or hatred of women is an age-old product of ascetic Christianity and, unfortunately, another issue whose existence the Irish artist must still acknowledge.

To understand the rampancy and historical persistence of misogyny in Ireland is partially to account for Loreleen's ironic retorts to males in the play. But while her treatment of the Rough Fellows in scene one is delightfully sardonic, her bitterly callous gibes directed at One-Eyed Larry seem overly harsh, notwithstanding the peasant lad's weasel-like character. Loreleen is perhaps best understood after an examination of the medieval "female satirist." According to the ancient laws of Ireland, "the professional woman of satire [much like her male counterpart] was a fearsome person to be kept legally outside the bounds of respectable family and tribal life."[53] Domineer's desire to "pack her off to America," (III, 198) and Marthraun's own renunciation of parenthood (I, 152) reflect just such an attitude and tend to establish Loreleen as a kind of representative figure, in a manner similar to Domineer's being identifiable with St. Patrick of the Ossianic ballads. Moreover, Loreleen demonstrates a "personal vengefulness" that is almost always attributed to the female satirist;[54] she reacts to past and present attacks on her person by verbal retaliation after the fashion of her feared predecessors. In her encounter with the mean spirited Rough Fellows, retaliation takes the form of marvellous language wherein (again like her historical counterpart) "she induces her victims to break their most important specific taboos."[55] But if her conduct is occasionally fearsome, it nevertheless constitutes a justifiable defense of the shame she is forced to endure on and off the stage. The criticism directed against her by most of the male contingent is contemptible, both in the context of

the play and from the parallel medieval standpoint where undue verbal victimization of women resulted in their "full restitution."[56] While her retaliatory cynicism is ultimately self-defeating, it is yet preferable to, say, the fate of Conchobar's beloved, Luaine, who actually dies of shame rather than submit to the lustful demands of a male satirist.[57] In spite of its corrosive power, Loreleen's verbal aggression must finally be seen to be defensive since her acerbity is most keen when her shame is greatest. Beaten and dishevelled near the end of the play, she trades explicitly sexual insults with Father Domineer:

> Loreleen: [. . .] Take care a divil doesn't climb up your own cassock into your own belfry!
>
> Domineer (furiously): You'll dhribble th' blackness of sin no longer over our virtuous bordhers!
> (III, 216)

For Loreleen, and for Lorna, eternal shame and death are not inevitable; there is a viable though difficult alternative.

O'Casey's development of repressed and repressive individuals in the play is accompanied by a corresponding visual and verbal development of setting. Well before the moral and spiritual disorder in Nyadnanave are fully established, there are portions of dialogue that suggest a desolate, chaotic and confused land, information from which one might anticipate social and economic problems among the area's inhabitants. Very early in the play, the Rough Fellows bemoan "th' rough stones, th' twisty grass, an' th' moody misery of th' brown bog;" "this hole;" "this dread, dhried-up desert." (I, 149, 150) It is true that the lecherous pair, tempting Loreleen all too

incidentally, are "feedin' her up wid false music,"[58] indeed, a tune which she knows by heart. But their acute description of the vicinity, if couched in blarney, is nevertheless credible, perhaps even foreboding in its tendency to attribute ugly human qualities to real, visible features of landscape.[59] Furthermore, when the Messenger later regrets the suppression of the Cock's "wistful an' wondherful dance," (I, 160) and reflects on the evident "gaiety an' fine feelin'" in the "goose-step done by the Irish Militia in th' city of Cork more'n a hundhred years ago," (I, 161) there is an overwhelming sense that the beauty, happiness, and freedom of a former time have deteriorated, given way to what the purblind Rough Fellows have, ironically, described with accuracy.

Subsequent references to the sorry state of the neighbourhood are abundant. The Porter embellishes the First Rough Fellow's pronouncement, adding "god-forsaken" (II, 177) to the term "hole" that the area had been earlier deemed. (I, 149) Loreleen arrives at an expression of literal and figurative precision when she angrily views Nyadnanave as nothing short of a "bewildhered land." (III, 198) And a belesguered Lorna, hard pressed to soothe her step-daughter, with desperate optimism informs her that Father Domineer is "puttin' things in ordher;" (III, 198) moments later it is Lorna herself who is harshly instructed to "straighten out" the disorder wrought by Domineer's raucous exorcism. (III, 203) Clearly, all natural and inanimate objects are in a state of increasing unrest and confusion, the result of human conduct or stifled human attitudes, however, and not supernatural con-

trivance. Reported natural disorders continually alert and instruct O'Casey's readers, just as, say, Calphurnia's ominous dream of distraught nature heralds upheaval in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar.[60]

In the realm of human disorder, no one is more overtly confused than Sailor Mahan. He is forever grappling with the conflict between what his own instincts tell him to do and what clerically-initiated sanctions constrain him to do. Marthraun's ostensibly unsuccessful warning to his mate in scene two explicitly treats of one aspect of this conflict:

> 'It's plain, Sailor Mahan, you're still hankerin' afther th' things o' th' world, an' the soft, stimulatin' touch of th' flesh . . ..
> (II, 176-177)

Fear-fostering comments like these gradually corrupt Mahan's natural, essentially unreprehensible attraction to women, turning zest and blarney into lust and dissimulation. Notice how his declarations to Loreleen in scene three, prefaced by an avowal that his "sails of love are reefed at last," (III, 199) are interspersed with sincere and ulterior motives:

> Mahan: [. . .] This is th' first time I've caught you alone. I'll give you what you need, an' you can weigh anchor, an' be off outa this damned place. Listen, darlin': you steal out tonight to th' Red Barn, west of th' Holy Cross, an' I'll dhrive there with what'll get you as far as you want to go (He suddenly puts an arm round her in a kind of clutch.) Jasus, you have lovely eyes!
>
> Loreleen: (trying to pull his arm away) Oh Sailor Mahan, don't do that! Let me go -- someone may see us!
>
> Mahan: (recklessly): You deserve to be ruffled a bit . . .!
> (III, 200)

The rendezvous is scheduled for the "Red Barn" where, no doubt, the Cock runs rampant, and where there will be "ruffling" a-plenty, Chanticleer style, if Mahan has his way. The barn is located near the "Holy Cross," a significant detail which, however, ineffectually attests to the Sailor's probity, especially in light of the counter-balancing "fowl" diction in his appeal. But on the other hand, there are unmistakable vestiges of his defence of the women in scene one, and a clear sympathy for Loreleen's personal plight.

One may never absolutely condemn or condone the conduct of Sailor Mahan: one may only be sure of an ever increasing confusion in his behaviour, and hence, the inevitable frustration and ruin of a once sensible, sensitive man. Illustrating Mahan's final chaotic state of mind and the general circumstantial disorder that prevails, O'Casey shows the subtlety of his craft with some verbal topsy-turvy:

> [. . .] I'll keep this bullet till the day I die
> as a momento of a mementous occasion!
> (III, 206; my italics)

Mahan's spoonerism, concluding a declaration of ostensibly undying friendship for Marthraun, is a comic yet portentous distortion of language, a distortion which bespeaks Mahan's incurable confusion and more subtly belies the professed amity between the pair. In short, it is Mahan himself who has been "cyclonized with a box" from the relentless clergy and its cohorts. In Mahan, O'Casey has sadly portrayed the destruction of Nyadnanave's only influential independent thinker; he has shown the last drop of gumption squeezed from a man who had once thought there was never "anything engenderogically evil in that cock

as a cock, or denounceable either!" (I, 164) With that gumption goes the last hope of reversing the tide of clerical repression from within.

It is likely that O'Casey held Cock-a-doodle Dandy to be his best play because it so fully satisfied his formula for good, "living" drama. "To make a play live," O'Casey thought, one had to provide for the prominence of (among other elements) "the comic, the serious and the poetical imagination."[61] In the language of Cock-a-doodle Dandy, there is consistent evidence of all these criteria. Perhaps a brief recapitulation of O'Casey's dramatic language would be appropriate here; as Thomas Kilroy says of the language, it is one valid way "by which we may describe his imagination at work. . . ."[62]

The comic imagination of O'Casey can be found in sustained passages like the "earnest colloquy of betther men" or, remarkably, in a single word, as when Mahan ironically mistakes a bit of innocuous biblical diction of Marthraun's for some form of black evocation:

> Michael: [. . .] Th' one safe method of turnin' our back to a power like this is to go forward an' meet it half-way. (He comes close to Mahan, and whispers hoarsely) Selah!
>
> Mahan (mystified and frightened at what he thinks may be something sinister): Selah?
>
> Michael (emphatically): Selah!
>
> Mahan (agonizingly): Good God!
>
> (II, 176)

It is a base but functional trick of Marthraun's, executed after the fashion of his teachers, Domineer and Shanaar, the "killakee" specialists.

The richness of O'Casey's serious (or "sad") imagination is perhaps best shown at the close of scene two where Sailor Mahan, still

showing some fight, is deeply struck by a sudden act of violence:

> Mahan (frightened): He's hurted, Father; you hot him far too hard.
>
> (II, 194)

The line at once isolates the singular brutality of Domineer and expresses the utter helplessness of the town's most influential resistant. In his use of the word "hurted," O'Casey imparts an unmistakable child-like quality to Mahan's reaction; the word "hot" sustains the child-like tone while it obliquely suggests Domineer's ugly rage. The end product is a line of plaintive, almost whimpering alliteration, devoid of the strained or plodding quality common in alliterative prose or verse. The formidable Mahan is suddenly a frightened lamb in the face of the flock's latest sacrifice.

While the poetical imagination of O'Casey plays a larger role in The Silver Tassie, it is still very much a part of Cock-a-doodle Dandy. During the Cock's last bit of mischief-making where the Domineer contingent is mysteriously blown about the garden, O'Casey supplements the fantastical atmosphere with Marthraun's fearful observation:

> Listen to th' risin' evil of th' wind!
> Oh, th' beat of it,
> Oh, th' beat of it!
> We know where it comes from --
> Red wind on our backs,
> Black wind on our breasts,
> Thryin' to blow us to hell!
>
> (III, 211; my versification)

The lines are haunting, rhythmic, [illegible]ly versified. The alternating emphases in the metre roughly simulate the irregular gusting of the wind and therein suggest Marthraun's absolute submission to the whimsical powers that be. Moreover, Marthraun's chant, with its

heightened language, widens the disparity between the pro- and anti-Cock factions on stage, and consequently enhances the comic effect of the episode.

There can be little question that O'Casey's dramatic imagination in Cock-a-doodle Dandy has its freest rein, weaving a way in the rarefied air of the "Irish scene" he loved. The efficacy of his dramatic language and the diversity of his linguistic techniques complement the many intricacies of stagecraft. One might finally add that the increasing technical sophistication of stage and prop design, and of mechanical aids to production, augurs well for Cock-a-doodle Dandy, a play which surely demands almost as much imaginativeness to produce as it did to create.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

The critical future of Cock-a-doodle Dandy and The Silver Tassie will depend largely on the evaluation of ideas in the criticism of the last twenty years; the majority of O'Casey criticism has in fact appeared within this time period. While some conceptions of O'Casey's dramatic language have, of late, been favourably altered (Raymond Williams), and others remain generally negative (Seamus Deane), there is at least one positive, indeed major critic who, I feel, provides fallacious illustrations supporting his discussion of a vital area of linguistic study.

David Krause, in his article "'The Rageous Ossean': Patron-Hero of Synge and O'Casey," (1962) opened the door for the study of O'Casey's dramatic application of Gaelic mythology and oral tradition. By 1975, oddly enough, Krause himself had offered the only significant addition to his work by appending "A Final Knock at O'Casey's Door" to his original critical biography (1960). In this chapter, there is a brief study (to my knowledge, the first of its kind) on O'Casey's use of the flyting, particularly as it appears in several of the one-act plays.[1] While Krause must be commended for his critical trailblazing, I feel that his treatment of the flyting "in further pursuit of the comic O'Casey" is misleading. He defines the term well enough, viewing it as "a contest of raillery and ridicule," "a mock-battle of poetic invective in which words become the weapons of otherwise disarmed combatants, and the trading of comic insults is inflated to a rude and merry art of psychic liberation." As well, he briefly

traces the history of the flyting; noting its occurrence in a variety of national and ethnic traditions. But in all six of his examples (taken from three of the one-act plays), Krause misses the essence of the flyting, the vital aspect of contest or combat to which he himself had referred. In each instance, the quality of attack and riposte is lacking; he merely paraphrases the provocation leading to the insult which, by itself, amounts to witty invective. Flyting may mean straight verbal abuse, but the two-sided nature of the dispute or boast-session simply cannot be lost, nor need it be, considering the wealth of examples from which Krause might have drawn. Instead of offering a half dozen vituperative retorts, the critic would have been far better off citing at length, one solid, unmistakable example of flyting, complete with all the characteristic rhetorical trappings which have been detailed in my third chapter. In Figuro in the Night, for example, one extraordinary dispute over the Fall, between the Old Man and Old Woman, shows O'Casey's ingenious comic adaptation of the flyting:

> Old Woman: Adam an' Eve had to sthrike out for themselves, hadn't they? They couldn't easily forever sit undher a breadfruit, undher a banyan, undher a bamboo tree, in a garden, eating grapes, could they?
>
> Old Man: God forgive you, woman! No wondher dark things are happening, with God knows what kinda spirits walking the streets along with the ghost of Molly Malone. A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot, and that was God's own garden, woman.
>
> Old Woman: God's wot what?
>
> Old Man: What God's what's what?
>
> Old Woman: I'm asking you what's God's whot?
>
> Old Man: How can I tell what's God's whot's wot? It's what's not your what's whot or my wot's what. Only

God wots what His own wot is.

Old Woman: You're thinking so high that you don't know even what's your own whot's wot, or mine, or even Adam and Eve's, who well knew what was whot when she wove thread from a lamb's fleece into strips that Adam coloured a rich blue from the juice of an herb growing among the radishes, using the strips to brighten the lustre of her bonnie brown hair.

Old Man: Oh, woe, woe, woad woe.

Old Woman: Adam knew his what's whot, for he woad and he woo'd her.

Old Man: And lost his stattus and ruined us all and lost his loneliness, left lonely in the lovely garden they had to leave behind them. He woad and woo'd and won great woe for all![2]

Krause's examples, to repeat, merely isolate instances of witty invective, where they should illustrate, to credit O'Casey justly, the careful contrivance of competitive, boastful language in the formation of sustained comic and ironic passages. Moreover, it is at once inaccurate and evasive for Krause to suggest that his illustrations are "pure or impure flytings," especially in light of his relatively meticulous definition. In general, it must be said that this portion of his chapter inadequately illustrates O'Casey's linguistic ingenuity.

Valuable criticism of The Silver Tassie in future seems almost to have been guaranteed by two significant developments. The first of these is Raymond Williams' revaluation of O'Casey. Williams' brief but potent analysis of The Tassie is supplemented by a declaration that the play was rejected "stupidly and unjustly."[3] It is the kind of statement which, I feel, will not merely foster interest but provoke detailed examinations of the play from a number of critical perspectives. Perhaps Williams' newer comments have in fact influenced, to some degree,

the essays collected in the Sean O'Casey Review's spring 1978 issue, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of The Silver Tassie. This publication is, of course, the second development to which I referred; predictably, it contains a wide range of material on The Tassie which should stimulate a variety of critical reaction. Of particular relevance in this issue is Simon Williams' essay which recognizes and examines, as I have, The Tassie's linguistic complexity. If recent work by Simon Williams, Bernice Schrank and others is any indication, the value of a thorough linguistic approach to O'Casey's drama appears finally to have been realized where in the past it has, so often, only been acknowledged.

Notes

Chapter I

[1]Bernice Schrank, "You needn't say no more": Language and the Problems of Communication in Sean O'Casey's The Shadow of a Gunman, Irish University Review, 8, No. 1 (Spring, 1978), p. 24.

[2]"Introduction," Sean O'Casey: Modern Judgements (Glasgow: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 11-41. There are a few ways of accounting for Schrank's failure to mention Ayling's 1976 publication, Continuity and Innovation in Sean O'Casey's Drama (Salzburg). It is possible that the book did not receive widespread distribution until during or after the conception of Schrank's article. If Schrank knew of Ayling's monograph, it is possible that she regards it, as I do, as having an important but not overriding concern with dramatic language. It is more surprising, in any event, that Schrank does not mention Ayling's "Patterns of Language and Ritual in Sean O'Casey's Drama." This paper is published in Literature and Folk Culture: Ireland and Newfoundland (St. John's, Nfld.: Memorial University Press, 1977; pp. 33-56), a collection which Schrank herself jointly edited. However, as in the first case, the article may not have come to her attention in time.

[3]"The Unity of the Silver Tassie," Sean O'Casey Review, 4, No. 2 (Spring, 1978), pp. 99-112. This paper and my own chapter on The Tassie were written roughly at the same time. With his detailed approach to the language of the play, Williams naturally considers many of the passages that I have examined. Despite its pertinence, it is apparent that a proper critical evaluation of his article would fill many pages; and it seems at once futile and improper to alter the conception of my chapter in order to treat some of Williams' ideas, or to enter into a discussion of the various points of contention in a long array of hastily arranged notes. I have chosen, therefore, to forego any discussion of Williams' article in the ensuing chapter.

[4]"The Silver Tassie and Others: A Revaluation in the Light of the Absurd," Sean O'Casey Review, 4, No. 2 (Spring, 1978), pp. 139-72.

[5]Robert G. Hogan, The Experiments of Sean O'Casey (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), p. 152.

[6]See note 2.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ayling, Continuity, p. viii.

[9]Ayling, "Introduction," p. 20.

[10]Raymond Williams, Drama from Ibsen to Eliot, rev. ed. (London: Peregrine, 1964), p. 232.

[11]Ibid, p. 189.

[12]Raymond Williams, Drama from Ibsen to Brecht, 2nd ed., rev. (London: Pelican, 1973). Williams' conclusion to his chapter on O'Casey, for example, is penetrating though it shows a mild tendency toward loquacity or effusiveness:

> It is to the Abbey plays that we still go back, but watchfully, moved and involved and yet without sentiment: seeing what happened, what so strangely happened, as the rhetoric and the reality collided, memorably, and then lurched away singing, gesturing, suffering.
>
> (p. 169)

[13]Ibid, p. 163.

[14]Williams, Drama from Ibsen to Eliot, pp. 190-92.

[15]Williams, Drama from Ibsen to Brecht, p. 166.

[16]Thomas Kilroy, "Introduction," Sean O'Casey: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), p. 11.

[17]John Arden, "Ecce Homo Sapiens: O'Casey's Theatre," Sean O'Casey: A Collection of Critical Essays, op. cit., pp. 61-76.

[18]John Arden, in "O'Casey's Theatre," argues convincingly (albeit conditionally) in support of O'Casey's verbiage in one of the plays to which Raymond Williams once objected, Red Roses for Me.

[19]Kilroy, "Introduction," p. 9.

[20]This dispute is briefly covered in Ronald Ayling, "Ideas and Ideology in The Plough and the Stars," Sean O'Casey Review, 2, No. 2 (Spring, 1976), pp. 125-26. But for the full correspondence, see David Krause, ed., The Letters of Sean O'Casey, 1910-1941 (New York: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 167-73.

[21]"Sean O'Casey as a Socialist Artist," Sean O'Casey: Modern Judgements, ed. Ronald Ayling (Glasgow: Macmillan, 1969), p. 193.

[22]Arden, "O'Casey's Theatre," p. 67.

[23]Raymond Williams, Drama from Ibsen to Eliot, pp. 32-33.

[24]"Cockadoodle Doo," Blasts and Benedictions: Articles and Stories, ed. Ronald Ayling (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 143.

[25]Cited in Ronald Ayling, Continuity, pp. 131-32.

[26]Continuity, p. 132.

[27]Ayling, "Introduction," p. 12.

[28]Ibid, p. 31.

Chapter II

[1]W.B. Yeats, "The Silver Tassie: A Letter," in Sean O'Casey: Modern Judgements, ed. Ronald Ayling (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 86-87.

[2]See O'Casey's account in Rose and Crown: Autobiography: Book 5 (London: Pan Books, 1973), p. 38.

[3]Sean O'Casey, "W.B. Yeats and The Silver Tassie," Blasts and Benedictions, ed. Ronald Ayling (London: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 99-102.

[4]Yeats, "A Letter," op. cit., p. 87.

[5]See O'Casey, Rose and Crown, p. 38.

[6]Yeats, "A Letter," p. 87.

[7]"From Bernard Shaw," 19 June 1928, The Letters of Sean O'Casey 1910-1941, op. cit., pp. 284-85.

[8]Sean O'Casey, The Silver Tassie, in Three More Plays (London: Macmillan, 1973); I, 34. All subsequent references to the play will be taken from this edition and indicated in the text of the chapter according to act and page number.

Mrs. Heegan's assumed awareness of life's sacred quality, even at this early stage of the play, is discernibly ironic and sanctimonious.

[9]Even before Sylvester's bit of deductive psychology, (I, 31) there is sufficient dialogue hinting at Susie's repressed sexuality. Susie's rhetorical admonition of Mrs. Foran involves a conspicuously graphic, almost lewd description ("[...] the honey-pot kiss of a lover;" I, 26) more reminiscent of the Song of Solomon than the Gospels. Her subsequent advice for Sylvester and Simon "not to live leg-staggering an' belly-creeping among the pain-spotted and sin-splashed desires of the flesh" (I, 27) smacks of Shanaar in Cock-a-doodle Dandy who revels in sensual detail more than he reviles the subject of his attention.

[10]This is very close to a line in Shaw's Major Barbara (London: Penguin, 1973) where, significantly, Miss Undershaft avoids the kind of thinly veiled self-glorification in which Susie Monican indulges:

There are neither good men nor scoundrels: there are

> just children of one Father; and the sooner they stop calling one another names the better. You neednt talk to me: I know them. Ive had scores of them through my hands: scoundrels, criminals, infidels, philanthropists, missionaries, county councillors, all sorts. Theyre all just the same sort of sinner; and theres the same salvation ready for them all. (I, 71)

The different approaches of Major Barbara and Susie Monican to Christian faith will be subsequently discussed in the body of the chapter.

[11]I have developed this idea of Gay's ironic complexity in an unpublished paper. While it is impractical to provide details of how ironies accrue from Gay's rewriting of original lyrics and re-orchestrating of original tunes, it is significant that Ronald Ayling convincingly argues for the same kind of multi-level irony in songs like "Keep the Home Fires Burning" in The Plough and the Stars. See his "Introduction" to Sean O'Casey: Modern Judgements, op. cit., p. 18.

[12]As my introduction suggests, it is the King James Bible with which O'Casey was familiar, and on which all subsequent commentary will be based.

[13]At the end of act one, for example, there is a total breakdown of communication between two self-involved civilians alone in the same room:

> Mrs. Foran: Every little bit of china I had in the house is lyin' above in a mad an' muddled heap like the flotsum an' jetsum of the seashore!
>
> Mrs. Heegan (with a deep sigh of satisfaction): Thanks be to Christ that we're after managin' to get the three of them away safely. (I, 46)

Such complete disregard, each for the other, significantly looks ahead to the unfortunate lack of meaningful communication between the high and low ranking soldiers in the second act.

[14]The same connotation, of course, is operative in O'Casey's first staged play, The Shadow of a Gunman.

[15]See "To Gabriel Fallon," 9 December 1925, The Letters of Sean O'Casey, op. cit., p. 158.

[16]George Bernard Shaw, "Preface" to Major Barbara, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

[17]Ibid, p. 33.

[18]It should be noted that Susie has actually intimated (unwittingly, of course) Harry's sad transmogrification. Her infantile insistence in act one that "Harry's different" (I, 42), lingers as it cloys, and therein, helps set up a significant verbal irony in the play.

[19]Mrs. Heegan's notion of safety and order becomes a rather ineffectual euphemism which barely disguises her obsession with money. According to Mrs. Heegan, Jessie's bank book is "spaced an' lined; signed an' signatured; nestilin' in a blue envelope to keep it warm." (I, 33) By the final line in the act, when Mrs. Heegan declares, "Thanks be to Christ that we're after managin' to get the three of them away safely," (I, 46) the audience is alive to her truer pecuniary meaning. Moreover, the audience will shortly see the irony in associating the men with any form of "safety."

[20]This is the ballad around which the entire play was built. See Eileen O'Casey, Sean (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 68-69; also, Rose and Crown, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

[21]Yeats, "A Letter," op. cit., p. 87.

[22]J.C. Trewin, "Introduction, Three More Plays, op. cit., p. xii.

[23]"Comedy, Origins of (Greek)," The Oxford Classical Dictionary, ed. M. Cary et al (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), p. 216.

[24]Alternating single-line dialogue common to Greek tragedy but used effectively by many including Shakespeare (Henry VI) and, recently, Edward Albee in the closing scene of Who's Afraid of

Virginia Woolf.

[25]In the First Stretcher Bearer's chant, one may have difficulty determining what "it," mentioned ten times in six lines, represents. The ambiguity is functional, however; for, if "it" refers to some sort of wounding projectile, then the recreational setting (created by "gamboll'd" and "play") is, to reiterate, savagely incongruous. If "it" refers, from the third line on, to wounded men, then the impersonal horror of war is, quite literally, ten times compounded; the chant, in effect, playfully dehumanizes.

[26]This particular reference has been previously strengthened by Sylvester's own mocking retort: "Turn the hot cock on, and turn the cold cock on for Number Twenty-six . . . ." (III, 72) Sylvester insists on delaying until they "hear the final verdict." Susie's disciplinary command, however, comes just as surely as Barney's sentencing.

[27]"From Bernard Shaw," 19 June 1928, The Letters of Sean O'Casey 1910-1941, op. cit., p. 285. Of course, Shaw has aptly borrowed this passage from Romans 3:10.

[28]On Harry's bitterness, compare Job 9:18; 10:1.

[29]Sean O'Casey, Juno and the Paycock, in Three Plays (London: Macmillan, 1975); III, 70.

[30]"Requiem," in The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 1175.

[31]The line could conceivably allude to Macbeth and the fateful events surrounding this particular phrase in Shakespeare's play. For this practice of O'Casey's, one might compare the final act of The Plough where, as Raymond Williams points out, Nora's delirious rambling speech recalls the mad Ophelia.

[32]Yeats, "A Letter," op. cit., p. 87.

[33]Ibid.

Chapter III

[1]See Sean O'Casey, "Cockadoodle Doo," op. cit., pp. 142-45.

[2]See Sean O'Casey, Rose and Crown, op. cit., p. 35.

[3]W.B. Yeats, "A Letter," op. cit., p. 86.

[4]W.A. Armstrong, Cock-a-doodle Dandy, in Classic Irish Drama (London: Penguin, 1971), pp. 135-37.

[5]Ibid, p. 135.

[6]In his introduction to the play, Armstrong states:

> As the symbolic accessories of their costumes suggest, Loreleen, Marion, and the Messenger, Robin Adair, are in sympathy with [the Cock] from the outset. (137)

It is misleading to lump Marion in with this group for, like Lorna, she only gradually develops an admiration for the Cock.

[7]Armstrong, "Introduction," p. 136.

[8]Such negative sentiments are expressed by Seamus Deane in Sean O'Casey: A Collection of Critical Essays, op. cit., pp. 149-58. Of Cock-a-doodle Dandy and a number of other plays, Deane says that the language "is finally gross, because its idiosyncrasies are not a function of the play's meaning but are, rather, extraneous to it. [. . .] The men are still dreamers, the women still realists; sexuality is still life-giving, the Church still death-dealing." (p. 156) To corroborate the first claim, Deane produces a string of cryptic abstractions; the second claim seems largely impertinent and, in my opinion, oversimplified. Neither sentence is illuminated by textual reference. It is hoped that the present chapter will supplement this tentative invalidation of Deane's remarks.

[9]Armstrong, "Introduction," p. 137.

[10]Sean O'Casey, Cock-a-doodle Dandy, in Classic Irish Drama, op. cit. (I, 145). All subsequent references to the play will be taken from this edition and indicated in the text of the chapter according to scene and page number.

[11]This is a favorite pun of O'Casey's throughout his drama. Compare, in scene three, the Messenger's final incisive suggestion for Father Domineer:

> . . . thry to mingle undherstandin' with your pride, so as to ease th' tangle God has suffered to be flung around us all. (III, 215)

Again, the primary meaning of "suffered" is "allowed" or "permitted," but there is a clear indication that God Himself is pained over the course of events in Nyadnanave, in much the same way that He is "heart-sicken'd" and "shuddering" as a result of His children's inhumanity toward one another in The Silver Tassie (II, 63).

[12]Here and in a later sequence where he "surrendhers" a sizeable sum to purchase a bottle of what he assumes will be good whiskey (II, 177), Marthraun not only bemoans the on-going battle to keep one's head above water, but also, (subtly playing on his mate's genteel sensibility), infers that it is a disgrace to allocate funds imprudently. Of course, Marthraun would sooner "surrendher" to the pleasures of "Flanagan's First" than the demands of Mahan or the turf-workers.

[13]The same mentality prevails earlier in the scene as Mahan comments on his mate's fervent belief that Julia will get "a sign:"

> She will, she will, though I wouldn't like to bet on it. (II, 170)

Whether confronted with black magic or a sanctioned supernatural event, Mahan is, with a couple of humorous exceptions, a businessman first.

[14]The efficacy of this nautical vernacular in context is fascinating. To be running "close-hauled" is to have the sails set for sailing as close to the wind as possible; it is, in short, a fast boat and an efficient crew that sails close-hauled. Mahan, then, dubious of Marthraun's strange recommendations, euphemistically questions the speed and efficiency with which his mate's mind

operates. Marthraun, to Mahan's delight no doubt, is not cognisant of what appears to be a veiled (albeit, slight) insult.

[15]There is every reason to believe the Messenger's words in scene two:

> . . . Honour be th' clergy's regulated by how much a man can give!
>
> (II, 172)

[16]Mahan consistently shows a consciousness of rank; for example, his reprimand of One-Eyed Larry's impudent reference to "Micky Marthraun:"

> Mahan (with dignity . . .): Misther Marthraun in your mouth, me lad.
>
> (III, 200)

In the Porter's comically indignant "fella yourself!" in scene two, O'Casey tacitly recognizes the ugly pervasiveness of class-consciousness in Nyadnanave.

[17]Loreleen (dropping him a deep curtsy): Thank you, sir knight, for th' silken compliments to your handmaiden.
(I, 149)

[18]Robert C. Elliot, in The Power of Satire (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1960) points out that "the song of the cuckoo, a sacred bird in pagan times, has ominous association among the Irish folk." (p. 44) O'Casey uses at least one other significant national superstition connected with nature. Traditionally, the bog, where turf farming takes place, was believed to be possessed of a number of magical properties. The choice of setting for the play was perhaps partly governed by the existence of this traditional belief. See E. Estyn Evans, "Turf and Slane," in Irish Folk Ways (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 181-98.

[19]In the face of a critical business issue (the firing of his Lorry Driver), Mahan's nationalism takes a commendable socialistic turn: "He's a fine worker, Father, an' th' nation needs such as him." (II, 193) While Mahan's motives are impure -- after all, Jack's contribution to the nation carries no greater importance than his indirect contribution to Mahan's bank account -- his quasi-socialism is infinitely preferable to the theocracy that Domineer would have.

On the other hand, it shoud be remembered that O'Casey would not be totally unsympathetic with Domineer's assertion that "nationality is mystical, maundering nonsense." (II, 193) David Krause (among others) testifies that "throughout his life, O'Casey put his socialism before his nationalism . . . ." See The Letters of Sean O'Casey, op. cit., p. xvi.

[20]We are reminded of Marthraun's earlier branding of his daughter, the "godless and laughin' little bitch." O'Casey's use of this technique may well have come from Yeats. In his "Wanderings of Oisin" (doubtless an important poem for O'Casey) a typically blustering St. Patrick condemns the hero and the "godless and passionate age" in which he lives. See W.B. Yeats, Collected Poems (London: Macmillan, 1933), p. 360; and compare David Krause, "'The Rageous Ossean': Patron-Hero of Synge and O'Casey," in Modern Drama, 4 (1961-62), p. 275.

[21]O'Casey gives the word "decent" a functioning grammatical elasticity: used as an adjective, an adverb or a substantive, its thematic significance is made distinctive by its very obtrusiveness in the syntax.

[22]Similar though much less restrained sentiments are in fact expressed by Sailor Mahan in a comic account of Marthraun's aspiring tall-hat. (I, 153) It should also be noted that whereas the Messenger's penultimate song instructs his "darlin'" to come out "in reckless raiment," (III, 217) the lyrics clearly advocate gaiety rather than ostentation.

[23]Vivian Mercier, The Irish Comic Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 84.

[24]Ibid, p. 111.

[25]See Elliott, p. 73ff, 131.

[26]Mercier, p. 146.

[27]"Celt," in The Encyclopaedia Britannica, eleventh ed., vol. 5 (Cambridge: University Press, 1910), p. 629.

[28]Mercier, p. 146.

[29]William Carleton comments on an imprecation similar to Mahan's:

> "Sweet bad luck to you!" Now, whether we consider the epithet sweet as bitterly ironical, or deem it as a wish that prosperity may harden the heart to the accomplishment of future damnation . . . we must in either sense grant that it is an oath of powerful hatred and venom.

See "Oaths, Curses, Blessings," in A Treasury of Irish Folklore, ed. Padraic Colum (New York: Crown, 1954), p. 425.

[30]Elliott, p. 28.

[31]Mercier, p. 116.

[32]Elliott, p. 23.

[33]Elliott, p. 39; cf. Mercier, p. 112.

[34]Mercier, p. 119.

[35]Ibid, p. 219.

[36]Mercier, p. 220; cf. Elliott, pp. 42-43.

[37]Elliott, p. 25.

[38]Mercier, p. 7.

[39]Shanaar perhaps represents, in O'Casey's mythological schema, the wandering bard who was held in very low esteem compared even with the lowest grade of fili. For an interesting and pertinent discussion on the bardic order and their infamous silver "pot of avarice," see Douglas Hyde, A Literary History of Ireland (London:

Ernest Benn, 1967), pp. 486-89.

[40]I refer to the miraculous transportation (and the various amazed accounts) of Father Domineer on the back of some undetermined species of heaven-sent fowl.

[41]Cited in Robin Flower, The Irish Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), pp. 46-47.

[42]Elliott, p. 69.

[43]Ibid, p. 290.

[44]Alfred Nutt, Ossian and the Ossianic Literature, 2nd ed. (London: David Nutt, 1910), p. 31.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid, pp. 32-33.

[47]The most renowned and longest of these, significantly, is another "colloquy," the Acallam na Senorach, a late fourteenth century conglomeration of prose and verse. "The Colloquy of the Ancients," as it is called, shows traces of the "over-scrupulous sanctity" which Patrick later exudes in the fifteenth and sixteenth century poems of the Ossianic cycle. See Nutt, p. 22, and Hyde, p. 116.

[48]Nutt, p. 48.

[49]Elliott, p. 40.

[50]See Mary Claire Randolph, "Female Satirists of Ancient Ireland," in Southern Folklore Quarterly, 6. No. 1 (March, 1942), p. 84.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Another significant point of comparison lies in the fact that the female satirist "may have druidical powers of metamorphosing herself into other forms." See Randolph, p. 85.

[55]Randolph, p. 85.

[56]Elliott, p. 25; Randolph, p. 84.

[57]Elliott, p. 27.

[58]See Colum, p. 425.

[59]In his stage directions, O'Casey is very specific about the rough and rugged detail of the natural setting. See Cock, p. 143.

[60]This play was perhaps one of his favorite. See "Shakespeare was my Education," in The Sting and the Twinkle: Conversations with Sean O'Casey (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 42-45.

[61]O'Casey, "Cockadoodle Doo," p. 143.

[62]Kilroy, "Introduction," p. 13.

Chapter IV

[1]David Krause, Sean O'Casey: The Man and His Work; An Enlarged Edition (New York: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 318-20.

[2]Sean O'Casey, Figuro in the Night, in Behind the Green Curtains and other plays (London: Macmillan, 1961), pp. 99-100.

[3]Raymond Williams, Drama from Ibsen to Brecht, op. cit., p. 167.

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